DA
950
.3
.M3

THOUGHTS, &c.

ON THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CLERGY, RELIGION AND PEOPLE,

IN

IRELAND.

[Price Four Shillings and Sixpence.]

THOUGHTS

ON THE

CIVIL CONDITION

AND

RELATIONS

OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC CLERGY, RELIGION and PEOPLE,

IN

IRELAND.

By THEOBALD M'KENNA, Esq.
BARRISTER AT LAW.

You have industriously destroyed all the opinions and prejudices; and, as far as in you lay, all the interests that support Government.—BURKE.

London:
Printed for J. BUDD, Crown and Mitre, No. 100, Pall-Mall.

Feb. 1805.

D A 950
.3
M3

[Cox, Son, and Baylis, Printers, Gt. Queen Str.]

THOUGHTS,

&c. &c.

SECTION I.

General and Introductory Views of the Subject.

It appears to be universally admitted, that the Roman Catholic religion in Ireland requires some arrangements different from what have hitherto existed, and in the general attention which recent circumstances have procured for the affairs of this country, it will perhaps not be found unacceptable or useless, to offer a few details on that interesting subject of political economy. That form of Christian discipline is administered in Ireland to about four-fifths of the population, by a body of Clergymen, who have preserved, in regular succession, the orders of their hierarchy; who have no connexion with the government, and not a great deal with the property, of the country. The merits of this order certainly deserve the highest praise; it is virtue without any auxiliary. I respect these qualities very highly; but I cannot avoid a reflection, that the superstructure of our national settlement would rest on a basis more certain and more solid, if such important functionaries perceived themselves to be embarked in the same cause a d bottom with the state, and participating in the same

dangers and alarms. Allowing the greatest possible latitude for an acute sense of duty, and a zealous discharge of it, this still is but an impulse; and, where so many are to concur, it is difficult not to suppose cases of relaxation or of total failure. There is no incentive to give the feelings of the individual a direction, corresponding with the public good or with his own moral obligations. The adherents of the Roman Catholic religion count among them some of the most respectable names in the island, a few survivors from the ruin that befel our ancient gentry and nobility; the number is yet more considerable of those, who since the relaxation in 1778, have invested their money in land, or risen to fortune with the ordinary prosperity of the country. Of the substantial class, whose industry produces from 50l. to 500l. per year, I compute the relative proportion to stand thus:—To the north of Drogheda,* a very decided majority are of the Protestant, or rather of the Presbyterian, discipline. From that city, in one direction to the Barrow, and in another to the Shannon, there are in

* This is more exactly the case to the north of the river Ban. Between that river and Drogheda there is considerably more of a Roman Catholic ycomanry.

I shall again recur to this division—it appears to me to correspond more exactly with, and to describe more truly, the difference of occupation, manners, and religion, than the usual distribution into provinces. The first, or northern district, is the principal seat of the linen manufacture. The second, or central district, is influenced by the vicinity of Dublin; both the capital and labouring hands are directed to the supply of the metropolis; the lands are principally occupied with cattle. In the third, or Munster district, is the great growth of corn for domestic use and exportation. There are some advances to the linen manufacture in Connaught, but pasture is the great employment of that district. There is more of a Protestant peasantry in Leitrim and Sligo, than in any other part of Connaught or in Munster. I class with Munster a considerable part of Leinster, on account of the uniformity of pursuits and manners.

n the middle class, about three Catholics to two Protestants. From the left bank of the Shannon to the Barrow, the former are probably five to two. The remainder of Ireland is Connaught, enclosed by the Shannon; through the greater part of it, the Catholics, in the well-circumstanced condition of life, predominate still more considerably. The mere labouring peasantry are, in the two latter districts, almost to a man, Catholics; in the second, they are probably as seven, and in the first, as about three to one. Where Protestant colonies have been settled, they remain; but for the most part this portion of the population has formed towns, or repaired to such as were contiguous. Those who did not profit of the advantage, which, down to the year 1778, the law conferred upon them, and advance themselves to easy circumstances by means of their monopoly, have rather practised the occupations that are used in towns, leaving the more laborious, although ultimately the more profitable, operations of agriculture to the Catholics.

But still, with the exception of a very few in the Northern district, the Roman Catholics retain in the towns a large majority of the gross population. Of the inferior people they may be about two to one; the proportions are rather equal in the middle rank. The superior department of commerce was more conducted by Catholics thirty years ago than it is at present; they have lost at that side, a good part of what they gained in the class of country gentlemen. I attribute this variation, first, to a very natural impulse:—after having been debarred for near eighty years from permanent acquisitions in land, when the restraint was removed, such Catholics as had the command of money ran upon that species of property with very great avidity. Some

strangers, whom the encreased commercial opportunities of Ireland attracted, in these latter times, from the other parts of the empire, of course were Protestants. Thirdly, commerce has not prospered for a length of time in Catholic houses; they have but recently disused the practice of giving to their youth a foreign education in countries and among persons, with whom commerce was not in estimation. Their early habits were formed upon the example of the military nobility of France, or of the opulent Roman Catholic aristocracy of England.

The Catholics must also have declined as traders, from their inability to diversify professions, according to the inclinations or aptitude of their children; he, who was very well calculated to appear with advantage in the department of the law or in military life, might be deficient in many requisites for superintending the employment of a capital; where all were necessarily huddled together in the same pursuit, the insufficiency of one tended to render the talents of the other neffectual. It is astonishing how frequent has been the decline of commercial houses of this description, and how few of them have long survived their original founder.

Dr. Duigenan concluded, from the returns of persons admitted into the House of Industry in Dublin, that three to one forms the relative proportion of Catholics to the other bodies; but if the returns were even accurate, which I am disposed to doubt, they do not afford a proper ground on which to extend the inference beyond the very spot from which the remark was collected. Dublin is more inhabited by Protestants of the lower class than any other part of Ireland, except two or three of the linen counties, and the resort thither is greater from the northern, than the other parts of Ireland. When a peasant of the south of Ireland is disposed to emigrate, he goes

goes in preference by the ports of Cork or Waterford to England or to Newfoundland. It is a remarkable fact, that the Irish language is more currently spoken in Covent Garden market, than in any part of Leinster. Several Protestants are brought here as servants; several fix in this city, who have come from England and Scotland, as artificers or soldiers. If similar establishments in Cork or Waterford were inspected, they would probably not present a return of one Protestant in twenty, and if at Galway, not perhaps one in seventy; besides I am informed, that the paupers admitted into the House of Industry in Dublin, frequently declare themselves Protestants, in the expectation that they will therefore be more favourably considered by the petty officers of the establishment. It is very probable, that a beggar might employ this artifice, and that the persons placed in the inferior departments of the house, may be capable of that weakness; they are taken from an uneducated class, in which such prejudices are likely to be prevalent. But, if it even were true, that the relative proportions are as three to one, it is yet a very strong case for interference. The same gentleman avers that the mass of the Catholics are indigent, and he grounds his opinion upon two facts: that they possess but a moderate proportion of estates in land, and of the stock of the bank of Ireland. In the former instance he is accurate as to the first proprietor of the soil, but he suppresses the multitude of derivative interests, which constitute the bulk of property held by persons who reside in Ireland; and he makes no account of the capital which the manufacture of land engages; he seems to consider the head landlord to be the sole usufructuary. Again, in the instance of bank stock, a vast number of men may, and actually do, employ a middling capital in some species of industry,

although

although few of them arrive at such superfluity as renders it desirable to place their money in a fund, which is not assisted by their exertions. The persons who make this disposition of their property, are professional men, or persons in office, having no other means of rendering that superfluity productive. If the assertion mean any thing it must be designed to insinuate, that the Catholics constitute no part of the solid and deliberative public mind of the country, whose judgment is respected in a government like ours, and whose good will deserves to be conciliated. But this is exactly the reverse of truth,* and the author of the assertion attempted a very serious imposition on those to whom he addressed his instruction. The value of a million in five hands gives the idea of dignity and honour, but half the amount, distributed among one hundred persons, furnishing to each the means of independence, and affording leisure for reflexion, constitutes infinitely more of the public feeling and sentiment. The statesman will probably attend to the judgment of the one description; but he will guide the inclinations, and anticipate the wishes of the other. Perhaps it was the utter disregard of this class of men for many years, which threw Ireland into disorder, and the vigilance, exerted in studying and accommodating the same description, which, under Mr. Pitt's administration, rendered government in England popular and efficient. There is some political application in the miser's adage, "take care of your shillings and pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves." As a matter of boast or of reproach, these discussions are perfectly contemptible. I am ready to admit to whoever

* Those, who desire to learn the extent of Roman Catholic property, should consult the fairs and markets of three provinces, of which the transactions are principally managed with that property.

whoever challenges the concession, that, if the Catholics were to be considered a distinct and hostile people, they are not in a condition to contend with the British Government. If that power could possibly abuse its situation, it might undoubtedly subdivide its subjects, depress any particular portion of them, and combat others, should they prove refractory, with their own resources. But this is not the view in which the matter is to be regarded—as a great portion of the population, the Catholics of Ireland are an object of fostering care, and in no sense is that care more imperiously demanded, or the exercise of it more laudable, than when you endeavour to facilitate to them the advantages, and enforce the moral restraints of christianity. Taken as an essential, and extensive part of the divided opulence and producing interest of the community, of those who create and who supply wants, who pay taxes and make the land fruitful, they are entitled to every attention which in any country the provident legislator and statesman bestows on these conditions. In order to form a more just criterion of the situation of the Roman Catholics,* than that which Dr. Duigenan laid down, I shall state this fact:—the persons of that religion, in our metropolis, support about twenty-five establishments for the education of poor children, and collect among themselves about 11,000l. annually, for that purpose. †

The reformation received, in Ireland, a parliamentary sanction early in the reign of Elizabeth, but never was able to procure the concurrence of the people; it was fol-

* Lord Sheffield rendered this assertion more respectable by having also introduced it in his work on the trade of Ireland.

† An instance has just come to my knowledge, where 900l. were collected in a very few days, among the Roman Cath6lic inhabitants of a co ntry town, for rebuilding the parish chapel.

followed solely by the several colonies, successively planted in that and the ensuing century. The statute authorizing the change of liturgy was frequently alleged to have been clandestinely enacted, and was said to have lain dormant for near forty years, when it was enforced by the deputy Lord Chichester; such a fact is, indeed, very consistent with the little attention then paid to the proceedings of Parliament. That the alteration was obstinately resisted, will pass, with one party, as evidence of fortitude and discrimination; will be stigmatized by the other, as dull and blind, or perverse infatuation. Here it will be the peculiar blessing, and there the reprobation, of Providence. I can see in the matter enough of ordinary and human machinery, to raise my eyes no further, and refer the course that things have taken, to accident, the complexion of government, and the private views and conduct of occasional rulers. The country had been too much agitated to allow leisure for speculation; the way was not prepared for a variance of impressions, and the attempt seemed profanation. If O'Neil and the Irish chiefs of that age had been judiciously managed, it is probable that they would have acceded to the fashion of the time, and the desire of their sovereign; in that leader, religion appears to have been rather a colour than a principle of action; like all other malcontents, when private disgusts had instigated him to violence, he had no objection to sanctify his banners with this plausible and popular recommendation. Lord Strafford conceived the design of introducing uniformity, and made some progress in the execution of it: But the stern character of that nobleman was not adapted to persuade; and command, his more usual and favourite expedient, has rendered every similar enterprize impracticable. The inquisition after defective titles, which he

pursued

pursued with overbearing rigour, alienated the possessors of property, and consequently their dependents, and rendered insecure the tenure of every rood of land in the kingdom. Historians gravely and calmly represent this expedient, as a means of reform, and an ordinary resource of revenue. It was a system of universal quibbling, equally oppressive, impolitic, and iniquitous, which no mind tinctured with a sense of right can forbear to reprobate. The uncertainty of property retarded the usual tendency to improvement in arts and manners, and this backwardness was offered as a reason for forcible dispossessions, for a change of proprietors, and a new intermixture of inhabitants. The management of administration by Lord Strafford was one great cause of the rebellion of 1641 ; if he had continued to govern, his energy would have prevented the ill effects of his misconceptions ; and as his intentions were upright, and integrity the basis of his character, he would have laid, in his own way, the ground of a durable settlement. His successors were at once fraudulent and feeble, improvident, careless, and tyrannical. It required a character like Lord Strafford, bold, able, enterprizing, and head-strong, to scatter widely the germs of discontent, and such men as his successors to ripen those seeds to inauspicious maturity. Even the virtues of that nobleman promoted the catastrophe, of which, contrary to all his intentions and principles, he was an essential instrument. Conscious of good intentions, he was inflexible in what he imagined right—the end proposed reconciled him, most unwarrantably, to the means which he adopted. I allude here entirely to Lord Strafford's attack on property, or rather to the extraordinary vigour which he employed in promoting this enterprize, which had been commenced before him. If instead of forming new plantations, he

had applied the same talents and the same power to secure and quiet former possessions, he would have given an utterly different face to Ireland; he would have averted the great convulsion that took place on this side, and he would probably have prevented on the other, the embarrassments of the crown, and the subversion of royal authority; for the disturbances of Ireland furnished, at once, to the republican party in England, a means of arming against the king, and an opportunity to raise him enemies, by the calumnies which the ill-affected were enabled, with some appearance of truth, to circulate.

During that period, when the change of religion was agitated, and whilst it was perhaps possible to be accomplished, from the reign of Elizabeth to the conclusion of the civil war, there was a considerable influx of adventurers to Ireland; they came in quest of fortune, and neither their destination, nor the means they pursued to realize their object, were calculated to endear them to the old inhabitants. The very introduction of these strangers must of itself have been invidious; they were brought with superior advantages of encouragement and accommodation, to partake in the possessions of lands, which another race of men had enjoyed immemorially. The illiterate of any, but especially of that age, were not likely to enter into the legal niceties which justify a transfer of title; they viewed the transaction as an act of partiality and violence, rendered no doubt more obnoxious by instances of fraud in the superintendants. The abuse of power may be inferred without much hazard, or without any great research or sagacity, from the state of things which at that time prevailed in Ireland. Authority was in general discretionary; it was entrusted to many; it was exercised at a distance from

inspection

inspection and control; exercised too by men, who heartily despised the nation they were deputed to act over. Would the new settlers, who were destined to edify and correct us, condescend to soothe and conciliate? Assuredly not, at least not to any general extent. They valued themselves too highly on the superiority of power, which they actually felt, and the civil and spiritual pre-eminence, which full as confidently they ascribed to themselves. Neither the members of government, nor the inferior colonists of the day, could under these circumstances have been cordially received; and the religion which they attempted to introduce, and of which they set the example, shared in their unpopularity. I do not recollect any Irish divine, who was distinguished at that period; I therefore presume, that Usher, Bramhall, and some other eminent Protestant ecclesiastics, were superior in accomplishments to their Roman Catholic contemporaries; but the latter description appears to have had every possible advantage over those inferior clergymen, who officiated under the new establishment. On the one side were strangers, who desired to derive the utmost advantage from the preferments by which they had been attracted: on the other were natives, who as a merit and a cause of compassion, could allege, that their benefices were with-held, and who still exercised their functions among their friends and kindred. Perhaps, finally, no circumstance was more decisive in preventing a change of sentiment than this, that the lands which, by the suppression of monasteries, devolved to the crown, were granted out to persons without influence or consideration in the country.

By the management of the Irish administration, and the intemperance of the English parliament, in the year

1641, a loose conspiracy and partial insurrection were magnified into a national and religious contest. So indissolubly were these two characters blended, and so firmly were they fixed upon the dissensions of this country, as to render it ever after an arduous task to disunite them. There was a point of honour in not deserting a cause, for which so many suffered; it was disgraceful by any sacrifice to compliment a ruthless and implacable enemy; for such the Puritans appeared to be whilst they prosecuted the war, and after its conclusion. No diminution of numbers has ever been experienced by a party, who could boast so many sufferers, as the event of that conflict left among the Irish Catholics.

When Cromwell arrived in Ireland, he found the clergy and gentry split into distinct factions, the people exhausted by the suspension of industry, and the expense, (unassisted by foreign intercourse,) of their own army and government. The nation fell an easy, unresisting prey to his arms, and he made them experience whatever is most severe, in the dismal denunciation of a victor's resentment. Fortune was wrested, life and feeling sported with, on the mere delinquency of the victim's religion. The most cruel trial still remained, and that which was most calculated to render the differences irremediable; neither the devotion of the Catholics to the royal cause, their personal sacrifices and acknowleged service to the king during his misfortunes, nor the enmity of the regicides, availed that unfortunate people after the restoration. By the indolence of Charles, the intrigues of his ministers, the policy of Clarendon, and coldness of the Duke of Ormond, the sweeping proscription of the usurping power was confirmed, and the Irish

proprietors,

proprietors prevented * from reassuming their inheritances. In this part of the empire alone, rebellion was animadverted on; and they who received the spoils, were criminals tenfold more atrocious and culpable, than the sufferers upon whom the penalty was inflicted. Some circumstances of the history of that time, and which appear to me to be not without advantage, as a lesson to our own age, serve to explain the conduct of the Duke of Ormond, and possibly of Lord Clarendon.

During the course of the civil war, this country had the misfortune to be visited by an Italian prelate, invested with the jurisdiction and function of Papal Nuncio, but not in any respect controlled by the civil authority. An assembly, composed of the principal nobility and gentry, directed the concerns of the armed confederates, and since the credit of Parsons and Borlace, the national enemies,

* I am aware, that many of my countrymen are extremely irascible on this subject, but as I am perfectly convinced, that it is now reduced to a mere historical fact, without influence or consequences as to the present time, I shall not refrain from referring to the great change of property during the usurpation; and this being the point, from which our present settlement originates, I shall have occasion more than once to recur to it. I have before me, at this moment, a list of the assembly who sate at Kilkenny, and governed the Irish confederates. I could demonstrate, that five-sixths of the families are extinct, and of the remainder, nine out of ten have conformed and enjoy all the partiality of the state, or else have, as Catholics, acquired, under the act of settlement, properties which they would not change for the chance of reassumption, if such a thing were in any degree practicable.

I have treated of the act of settlement pretty much as it was considered by Lord Chief Justice Keatinge, in the argument which he presented to King James against the repeal of it. The act was at that time but twenty-five years in existence. The Chief Justice gives up the original justice of the statute, but urges with unanswerable force of reasoning, that the rule of law which had been enforced for such a length of time, and under which purchases, settlements, and every species of transaction had been negociated, ought to be esteemed, and maintained, immutable.

enemies, declined—that body was much disposed to return to their obedience, under the Earl of Ormond's mediation. The sway of the assembly over the people was hitherto undisturbed; it consisted of the natural leaders of the country, and the clergy were as yet subordinate. The court of Rome permitted the supreme council to nominate to the ecclesiastical dignities, and the choice was judiciously directed to temperate and discreet clergymen, of principles favourable to the civil authority. So far nothing was uttered of a war for the temporal interests of the church, or of high and inconvenient ecclesiastical pretensions. The rash and domineering nuncio changed the face of affairs; he arrogated to himself the nomination to benefices, and promoted those fierce and fiery zealots, who had imbibed the highest notions of papal and clerical prerogatives. When Rinuncini had formed the clergy to a dependance on himself, he proceeded through their means to act upon the inconsiderate people; he was seconded by the fanaticism to which times of tumult are prone, by the deference paid to the minister of the Pope, and the respect of the people for the chiefs of a religion, under the banners of which they had been compelled, for self-preservation, to associate. He was able to frustrate the pacificatory projects of Lord Ormond, of the Roman Catholic aristocracy and gentry, and of a great and respectable portion of the secular clergy. He protracted the conflict, beyond the means and resources of the country, until the re-establishment of royal authority became desperate. In fact, to the ambition of this atrocious prelate, and the crime of the zealots who adhered to him, the subsequent calamities of the Irish were to be attributed. He prepared the way for the regicides, and procured a victory for them, on their part altogether bloodless.

I have

I have fully and fairly stated this fact. The deduction I should be inclined to make from it, would be different from that, which directed the proceedings of the statesmen I have mentioned, and of our succeeding legislators. Grant, that the Church of Rome affords to its clergy facilities for influence—was it then wise to remove every restraint, to take away from that clergy every passion, pursuit, and interest, except what, through the medium of its influence alone, were to be pursued or gratified? If the credit of the clergy was abused and was exorbitant, the possession of property inspires sentiments of independence, to which the state ought to have directed its attention. The landed gentry, whom the people reverenced, were the exact counterpoise to the church, and the ruin of that interest left the ecclesiastics without an antagonist. Even at this day, if any thing be apprehended from the ascendant of the Catholic clergy, the means, by which it is to be reduced and kept within reasonable bounds, are, to encourage that eminence among the laity, landed, mercantile, or professional, which powerfully tends to independence; a contrary policy seems to have been relied on.

It was perfectly in course that the nuncio should have found bigotry, where the imbecility of the ruling powers permitted him to call it into action and reward it. The like means would, in any society or country, be productive of the same consequences. Take the most enlightened age and people upon earth; the character of philosophy will not predominate, if folly alone be fostered. It was identically the same nation, but differently circumstanced, which elevated Fenelon, Bossuet, Robespierre, and Marat. It was the same religion which Dr. Blair and Dr. Robertson administered with dignity and decorum, and which had been an instru-

ment

ment of sedition or fanaticism in the hands of Knox and Peters. In the very age we hold in contemplation, the influence of the clerical teachers, in the reformed churches of England and Scotland, had been to the full as extensive, as much abused, and as formidable as what the nuncio exerted over the Catholics of Ireland. The popular preachers moved the people as they thought proper ; in Ireland nearly the same circumstance occurred, but with considerable opposition from a great portion of the laity, and the most prudent and considerate of the clergy. If an hostile mind has been preserved in Ireland towards the established government, some cause must be sought for that disposition. I ascribe it to these circumstances: the clergy were deprived of all hope of temporal consideration and advantage ;—the growth of opulence among the laity was checked, and those who surmounted the difficulties, or escaped the proscription, were prevented from becoming respectable. The mischief broke forth at a particular period, possibly from the collision of two principles, the departure from an old one, without yielding sufficiently to the new. But I shall have occasion hereafter to enter more extensively upon this subject.

I do not think it an unprofitable investigation, when the occasion offers, to search amongst lofty and plausible pretensions, for the little sordid or selfish design, which scarcely ever fails to lurk at bottom, and which is the true spring of action, where the other is merely colourable. All was not bigotry in the part of the clergy.—It was espoused by very few men of fortune. The property of the nation made a firm and zealous stand on the other side, and the opposition of this body would have proved effectual if the viceroy, fettered by consideration for the English Puritans, had not with-held the support of regular

authority.

authority. The partisans of Rinuncini were indigent persons, either the crowd who preferred the violent courses to which they had now been long habituated, to any settlement whatsoever; or the descendants of families formerly dispossessed, to whom peace, affording no prospect of compensation, was not desirable, and who rejoiced in the name of religion as a pretence for warfare. The incidents, that took place during the Nuncio's sway in Ireland, afforded, in truth, a decisive warning against the policy and proceedings which the Duke permitted, and which were afterwards more strenuously followed up by the popery laws, and all the incidents of that system. The principal adherents of that prelate were men of high pretensions and desperate circumstances; by dispossessing the Catholic proprietors, and keeping that body afterwards in a state of depression, the number of such persons was, beyond all measure, augmented. When the concerns of the Roman Catholic gentry were abandoned by the court of Charles II. on account of the turbulence and credit of the Nuncio, that order was punished for an evil against which it strenuously, but unsuccessfully contended. If the measure adopted were vindictive, it was not fairly applied—if precautionary, it was founded in the most palpable misapprehension. I consider this proceeding to have, in fact, fixed irreconcileably the difference of religion between the government and the people. The Act of Settlement was in that respect, as well as in apportioning the territory, an *uti possidetis*. Every man who lost his estate, or whose pretensions were in any respect frustrated, was concerned to impute the occasion to religion—he had every possible motive to preserve that tye of sympathy and suffering, which dignified and consoled his misfortune. Accordingly, we find before the civil war, that some

irreproachable clergymen, and the heads of the houses of Kildare, Ormond, Thomond, Inchiquin, and Roscommon, passed to the establishment;—during the reign of Charles II. there was no considerable conformity whatever.

Lord Ormond, before the circumstance I have mentioned, made no exertions against the Catholic religion; he became a Protestant by the accident of having been early a ward of the crown, and, pursuant to the practice of the age, educated away from his family, in the religion of the government. He seems to have embraced the sentiments impressed upon him with earnestness and sincerity; but he was altogether disposed to leave unmolested the society he had relinquished, and which, indeed, included his nearest relatives, and generally his kindred and dependants. In the early part of the disturbances he exerted himself to procure the protection of authority for the peaceable inhabitants, and to restrain and counteract the bigotry of the lords justices, and brutality of their officers.* During the progress of the civil war, he saw the people duped and misled, the natural ascendant of a revered aristocracy supplanted, and the interests of the crown obstructed essentially. I have already observed, that I consider his conclusions in this respect inaccurate; but as we are not to expect that an actor or an eye witness should judge so calmly as we are enabled to do at this remote period, I cannot but allow, that it was with considerable excuse he, after the restoration, manifested much political dislike to the professors of the Romish religion. He connived at least, as we already noticed,

* Lord Ormond's character seems to have been fairly marked by Bishop Burnet. He was not a man to give bad counsels, but he did not oppose the execution of them, when given by others.

noticed, at the violation of all justice, in barring the re-entry of the old proprietors, probably with the view to weaken the effect of an attachment, which he supposed to have been uniform, and knew to be formidable. I understand that in several of his grants, which still subsist, he caused a covenant to be introduced, obliging the tenant to exercise the protestant religion; and his instructions to the persons who conducted his business, are preserved by Carte, which direct, to wave his rights when they come in competition with the claims of English settlers. In one of his letters he boasts, "that he had at one time reduced the Romish hierarchy to a very few prelates, of whom several were bedridden."—But the occasion was past, pride and interest had been intimately mingled with religious impressions;—the nation was divided, as Sir Wm. Petty testifies, "into the vested and divested; the Protestants generally sympathizing with the former, the Catholics with the latter." If the court and councils of Charles II. had been more steady, and if they had patronised the proprietors against the adventurers at the restoration, the former would probably have been gained over, and with them the inferior mass of population.

With the exception of those * who yielded to the inducements of fashion or interest, comparatively a very small proportion, the descendants of both English and aboriginal families, who were settled in Ireland at the accession of Elizabeth, continue to this day Roman Catholics. The religion of the state had naturally the greatest attractions for the upper ranks, but the loss on

 this

* I make no account of the statutes of Anne or the charter-schools, as I consider the latter to have been utterly inoperative, and the former did not touch the population. I consider the effect of the popery laws to have been merely to turn the current of property into the other line.

this side was, in point of numbers, more than compensated by the lapse of families to the popular discipline, who having been casually settled in parts of the kingdom, where all other persons of their own condition are of a different religion, are led by the consequence of marriage, or even by their intercourse or habits, to adopt the forms that universally prevail in their vicinity. There are parts of Ireland as completely Catholic as any canton in Italy. The inhabitants of very extensive districts have no material intercourse with the members of any other sect. There are parishes in Connaught, in which a Protestant never was settled; in that province, in Munster, and in parts of Leinster, the entire peasantry for the scope of sixty miles, are commonly Catho ics; in these tracts, the churches remain frequently shut for want of a congregation, or are opened only to such a scanty assemblage as from six to twenty. I have been witness to what is by no means a solitary or unusual circumstance, but which may be met with on every Sunday in the year, in fifty different places—a very neat parish church, in which the bell tolled for the usual time, without attracting any individual beside the parson and his clerk, whilst at the distance of two hundred yards, above one thousand persons were assembled to hear mass, at a wretched hovel, covered in part with straw, but so ruinous, that one in twenty of the congregation was not protected from the rain, under it. I mention these facts, to justify an assertion on which I must reason,—*The Church establishment in Ireland does not satisfy the purposes of a national religion.* It may be a meritorious system of doctrine, a commendable form of discipline, but it does not reach the mind or the feelings of the people; you cannot guide the public sentiment of this country for either moral or political purposes, through the Protestant religion. We are frequently told, that

the

the Protestants amount to a third or fourth part of the inhabitants of Ireland; but this mode of enumeration is calculated utterly to mislead a person, not conversant with the face of the country, and who proposes to draw an inference from it, for political management or regulation. Perhaps upon the entire scale of population, the Catholics are not above four to one of all the other religions. But then of this non-Catholic fifth, the greatest portion is collected in a few counties of Ulster; the remainder, if they be poor, dwell in the towns, where they are employed in handicraft occupations; those of better condition live indeed in the open country, but placed aloof from the common people; without intercourse of habits or familiarity, their casual residence can be of little avail in moulding dispositions, and forming a character. This circumstance, that the Protestant poor reside in towns, and that the Catholic poor constitute the population of the open country, has been little attended to, but deserves the most serious notice, because it is conclusive to this point,—although you should be successful in communicating a particular impulse to the lower Protestants, you cannot calculate on the probability of extending it by intermixture or example; you must still cultivate and resort to the Catholic feeling; so that, when we are to consider the means of modelling the peasantry of Ireland to a temper more congenial to the existing authorities, the effect of the Protestant religion must be in a great degree put from our consideration. The value of it in that sense is generally not as one to one hundred.

With this great proportion of our people, attachment to the Roman Catholic religion is, as religious feelings never fail to be, a prepossession of superior and decisive influence;

influence; but it is more; opposition and various local circumstances have matured it into a principle of action, extremely forcible, and widely diffused in its operation. The Irish adhere to the discipline of the Roman church, not as small knots or as scattered partisans, who may be formed, managed, or directed, by the example of their neighbours; but by classes unmixed; by a spirit and by habits, which prevail without interruption over populous and extensive districts. It is in the breast of an entire people, the combination of party, of patriotism, and of all the feelings, prejudices, and consolations, that constitute devotion. When the traditions of the country commemorate any person as a good Irishman, they tell you also, that he was a steady Catholic. Among the most cruel and implacable hostilities ever waged, were those which, in the 17th century, repressed the insurrections of the Irish—never was any land afflicted with a more vexatious persecution, than the entire system by which priests were pursued, and popery discountenanced, down to a few years after the accession of his present Majesty. In all these seasons of calamity, the clergy were the most eminent victims; and their sufferings had so much the appearance of devotedness to the public good, they so strongly testified sincerity, that it is no wonder, a zeal thus disinterested, and thus earnest, should be rewarded on the part of the flock with great tenderness and veneration. Add to these particular motives of affection, the general tendency of the human mind to receive impressions of religion, and the force, which such derive from education and from usage. The Roman Catholic clergy have not always been the most learned or polished men; but in their ministry they are indefatigable, in their general morals of irreproachable demeanour, and peculiarly decorous in the practice

of

of those virtues which they have connected with the sacerdotal character. The censorship of the bishops, and of the body of each diocese upon its own members, is usually very vigilant and rigid. A form of religion thus introduced, and thus supported, must necessarily have been popular.

The state has thought it prudent to bestow its favour upon a different form of the Christian discipline. I am not disposed to arraign the propriety of this selection *; but I may enquire upon what grounds the government should decline to embrace within its protecting care another branch of the same common stock, equally applicable to every social purpose, which it has found firmly rooted in the island, and sanctioned with all the influence of immemorial prescription. This adoption is opposed by what to me indeed appears a most inconsequent mode of reasoning: faults are alleged against the Roman Catholic religion, as if we were investigating the propriety of giving it admission into our country; or as if some rash or untried novelty were set afloat, which it were a speculation to forbear with. It may probably be right to resist alterations in matters of moment, and even in trifles, to repress an innovating spirit; but between those cases and the instance before us, there is no reasonable parallel. I suppose no man will institute a comparison between the religions exercised in our Indian empire, and any of the forms of christianity; but because we cannot make christians of that people, ought we to suffer the religion which they are willing to practice,

* To avoid cavil, I express here my opinion, which I shall subsequently enforce—that the Protestant establishment ought not to have been put upon the Irish, but that the actual state of things, and distribution of the country, require it to be upheld with the strictest inviolability.

tice, to be debased, or its sanctions to be weakened?* Should we refuse to employ it as a means of procuring obedience, and preserving tranquillity?—Should we suffer the very worst passions of the human mind to extend their growth, and to predominate, by neglecting to check and counteract them, by the means which are within our reach, and which are easily applicable? The Roman Catholic religion exists in Ireland to a very considerable extent; it cannot be dispossessed, and ought therefore to be regulated; it has been adopted into the habits and usages of the nation. Without entering into the question, whether the people are right or wrong, we must pronounce, upon all the grounds which history and experience furnish, that it is not the best policy to contend, especially with a rude people, even for matters which influence the mind less powerfully than religion, and which having been rendered venerable by tradition, and familiarized by custom, they seem obstinately determined not to abandon. What would be the condition of our British empire? In what dissensions would it not be split? And how complex will its management and economy be rendered, if no religious institution is to be countenanced or encouraged, unless the King and Parliament adopt it as orthodox? There scarcely exists a similarity of profession or opinion, between any two members of the entire dominion; but the subjects of the several divisions are not to be abandoned to chance, because

* The great Frederick of Prussia did not consider the Roman Catholic system with any partiality, but when required to expel the Jesuits from his dominions, he declined compliance; his answer was—that he was satisfied with their manner of conducting a million and a half of his subjects, who were Roman Catholics, and that this concern was a matter of too much importance to make it a subject of experiment.

because they do not happen to coincide with their superior.

Amitting altogether the title of the present establishment to pre-eminence, upon principles of policy and convenience, and upon a view of the fitness of that pre-eminence to the actual circumstances of the country, we must recur to another fact, that this system is not alone sufficient to fulfil the purposes of a national religion. The dissent of a large proportion of the Irish people must be taken under consideration; it is no light or capricious novelty, but an ancient and hereditary impression, and therefore at least respectable. This predilection has been put to the test of a very active discouragement; perhaps the subjects of the experiment may have, in consequence, been rendered worse christians, and worse Catholics; but assuredly their original attachment has not been effaced, nor any bias created in favour of Protestantism. We have had the Church of Ireland by law proscribed, and the Church of Ireland by law established; the one, unable from the prevailing disinclination to its tenets; the other, from the difficulties under which it laboured, to cultivate the minds and morals of the people. Search among the calamities of Ireland for the effects of this conflict between the magistrate and the genius of the nation. It occasioned a want of cordiality between the government and the subjects;—it produced an indifference in the people to the concerns of their rulers; a generally unsettled habit of mind, and an aptitude for turbulence and innovation. In the more ancient disturbances of this island, as well as in modern times, the result and the mischiefs of this temper have been manifest.

No man can controvert the position, that a national religion is an institution of the highest merit and pro-

priety; but if your national religion, by any untoward circumstances, be prevented from extending its benefits to a material branch of your people, are you therefore to leave your provision incomplete? Or should you not rather meet the exigencies of your peculiar case with an appropriate remedy? If peace, order, and settlement, are to be introduced in Ireland, the people must be gratified in their habits and their predilections. In order to enjoy the advantages of christianity in a degree of perfection, the state must take it on the terms, which the subjects can most rapidly be induced to close with; it must permit the discipline and institutions of the Church of Rome to the majority of the people; nay, it must assist that people, by placing those favourite objects conveniently within their reach, and upholding the credit and consideration with which they are to be regarded. This matter is not to be discussed upon the merits of the several forms of religion. Theologians may dispute of tenets, the statesman is to act on other grounds; he must manage the materials that are placed before him. It is not a question whether certain doctrines shall find admission within your precincts; but, what mode of treatment is to be adopted where these doctrines are in full vigour? Are we to have this religion under the patronage or in the defiance of the government? Will you have it in amity with the law, and assistant to the maintenance of society? To the existence of Catholicism you indispensably must submit; the only matter of choice is, whether this Catholicism shall be derived and imitated from the most polished or the least enlightened parts of Europe. Although the essential dogmas remain the same, there are an infinity of observances, which vary with very great difference of effect, upon the public. As the clergy are liberal by their habits, by their educa-

tion,

tion, and by the place they hold in society; as they are enabled to attend minutely to the duty of instruction, in the same degree will the religion they communicate be sober, sound and rational, exempt from the intemperance of fanaticism and the puerilities of ignoran e.

Do I therefore suggest that it is a misapplication of the duties of government, to attend with a vigilant and earnest concern to the security of the church established? By no means. That church is undoubtedly an essential member of the state; public convenience has assigned to it a pre-eminence, which ought not to be violated. The balance of property, especially in land, has fallen into the hands of one description of christians. Incidental to this advantage is the enjoyment of the ecclesiastical dignities and revenues; the state pays this homage to the gospel, expediency directs the application. Clerical persons are exalted, that they may reflect honour on the doctrines they recommend, and that men of every rank may meet the votaries of religion among their equals. But whilst the Protestants fill the class of considerable proprietors, and the stations of consequence annexed to that condition, their clergy must enjoy a corresponding rank, or the institution fails in many of its moral effects and all its political utilities. It has been sometimes advanced, that the Catholic religion, in right of its majority of followers, was entitled to hold the advantages of the establishment. To me, that assertion appears to be an extreme mistatement of the fair rights and rational pretensions of the Catholic community. To provide for religion is a principal duty of the magistrate, but the means must be adapted to the end, and that provision must be according to the necessities of those for whom it is made, or it ceases to be effectual.

I do not applaud the means *, by which the ascendant in point of property was procured; but it exists, and ought to be upheld. So says ascertained law,—so says the wisdom of prescription—so says the principle of stability, without which the world neither knows harmony, nor repose, nor happiness, nor improvement. Then, whilst I acquiesce in a title to enjoy, I cannot cavil at the incidents which accompany or are necessarily annexed to the possession. Discussing the Norman invasion, as an historical fact, we must censure the conduct of William and of his followers; we are not therefore to dispute the municipal rights, which, originating in that event, have now become the sole rule of law, and are clothed with all the sanctity of justice.

So of the transactions which took place in Ireland during the 17th century. The annals of the times inform us, that towards the close of the 16th, and in the course of the 17th centuries, the clergy of the Roman communion, ministering to a contented people, were disturbed, in their possessions and jurisdiction, and finally evicted altogether. The rulers of the state conceived another form of religion to be more correct; whether their judgment was well or ill founded is immaterial to the point of view in which we consider the subject. Did they endeavour to communicate their impressions? Did they wait to carry their scheme into effect, until it was adopted by any considerable portion of the people, or were any probable means employed to procure this popular countenance?

The same record contains a negative to these enquiries,

* The general confiscation and new arrangement of property by the regicides, and the confirmation of those at the restoration by the act of settlement.

quiries, and represents this incident as a gross outrage, cruel, impolitic, and unjust; but it has given a shape to the country which is not at present to be altered; it was the reprehensible basis of a very accurate order of things, and of an excellent settlement, which prescription has sanctioned. Political propriety has at this day placed justice on the other side. When this enterprise commenced, the property, as well as the population of Ireland, was Catholic; both these respectable masses of power patronised the hierarchy that was deposed, and resented its overthrow. *Hac fonte derivata clades.* The calamities, by which above all nations this island has been afflicted, may be attributed to that wanton exertion of authority; incidentally it promoted, in no small degree, the disasters that befel the monarchy and the monarch. The temper of the age ran into these frenzies: a religious zeal, irrational, incoherent, and unmanageable, prevailed in Great-Britain, and Popery was pursued with more than the unsocial zeal, which is reproached to that discipline by its adversaries. The circumstances of the country are now essentially altered; we are formed to another state, and to a different system of institutions. The vast majority of property is on the side of reformed episcopacy, and the wants of the population may be much more effectually supplied, by alterations which were neither so violent nor so extensive. It were to imitate the faults and to invite the miseries of that dreadful æra, if we should turn our thoughts to a transfer of the church establishment; it were to inflict a similar violence upon conscience, upon the tempers of men, and upon habitual usages, and must prove alike subversive of all rules of right and expediency. Let us examine a little into the real state of things, and the manner in which the population is dis-

distributed, and we shall be led to a conclusion very favourable to the arrangements that exist, which were indeed not originally formed for the country, but to which the country at present is accommodated. The Catholic laity consists of private gentlemen, merchants, farmers, peasants, and mechanics; rank and fortune prevail among the Protestants. The imposing dignity of religion is to be preserved among the latter; the former require to be cultivated and consoled by an active ministry, fervent and assiduous in its duties. It would be utterly out of proportion to bestow on these descriptions a hierarchy of lords and affluent dignitaries; the intercourse of attentions which at present exists, and which is necessary, could no longer be expected. If the pastors of the Catholic religion were advanced to the affluence of the establishment, they would cease to consider the estimation of humble men as their reward, and to place their dependance upon character. You should still resort to new expedients, to procure what you have exactly at your hand at present, an order of energetic parish priests, neither too much refined, nor too much at ease, for the discharge of their laborious functions. Thus to vary the establishment in the present circumstances, would be to engage without any purpose in dangerous and perplexed courses—it would be an act unjust to the Protestants, and unprofitable to the Catholics.

Zeal, or party spirit, would on every side whisper a different language. On the part of the church of England, these acrimonious antipathies may perhaps suggest, that by with-holding external support from the Catholic discipline, the attachment to that system will decline, and the people be drawn within the pale of the more favored religion. This inclination to advance that

party

party we have espoused, without ever examining the result of our operations, is so very natural, and so very common, that, although I do not imitate, I shall not censure it. It would ill become me, whose judgment may be influenced by habits and education, to offer an opinion on the moral consequences of the change. I do not think it practicable, and I apprehend, that if the actual bias of the people were to receive a different direction, the consequence would not be the uniformity that is desirable, and that we suppose to be expected; but, if uniformity still continue as much as ever to elude the pursuit of its votaries, I can perceive no good, and I can point out a very positive evil to be produced, by the introduction of any of the inferior sects, into the place now occupied by the Catholic religion.

The habits of the Roman Catholic clergy are particularly founded in the practice of obedience; the other sects, who might probably unite the characters of popular and subordinate, do not present equal facilities for management. What a lever is episcopal authority? Could you form one head for presbyterianism or methodism? Could you compress all the irregularities, all the eccentricities, in practice and doctrine, which would arise in these societies, if either of them were to prevail through the nation? Could you place them under the control and peremptory jurisdiction of twenty-seven men, chosen if you please by yourselves, whom the head of the state may with ease direct for every reasonable purpose; whom you may hold in your hand, if you give them without reserve the essentials of their religion, and if you do not seek to interfere with the limits that shall be established? But in truth, all this reasoning is superfluous, for the succession of Romish ecclesiastics is by no means likely to fail, although their functions may be rendered more difficult,

cult, and their composition deteriorated; and while their is a sufficient number of them in existence, to present to the people the objects of their veneration, and the observances to which they have been habituated, to them that people will recur; their minds are too strongly engaged; long disuse might perhaps obliterate the impression—but here the inclination is kept ever alive and active, because the matters by which it is cherished are ever at hand, and the resort to them and the means of gratification neither difficult nor distant. There is a fund of piety or of fervent attachment to their religion, among the middle, and lower Roman Catholics;* the extremes of this temper will, to the end of time, provide candidates for the priesthood, more especially if that prolific power, opposition, communicate its creative influence to popular obstinacy. The mitigation of the popery laws, and the encouragements to tillage have diffused considerable wealth in Ireland. A very substantial and widely extended yeomanry has been formed among the adherents of the Roman Catholic religion. They have the means of liberality to their pastors, and undoubtedly will share with them, perhaps indeed more freely, for such is the vanity or perverseness of our nature, if they find these pastors discountenanced by the superior orders of society. The sex, whom tenderness, fervour, and strong attachments distinguish, will, from every rank co-operate

* A strong proof of the prevalence of this disposition, is the number of Catholic books of devotion sold to those descriptions. I understand that the supply of this demand constitutes in our country towns, the principal branch of the bookselling business.

I do not mean to insinuate, that there is not among the higher classes considerable earnestness of religion, but that they are not from their habits so likely to offer themselves for orders, nor so fit for a situation, which is not to aspire beyond mediocrity.

co-operate in rendering easy the condition of men, who apply themselves to one of the strongest, the most amiable, and commendable impressions. Thus, it does not follow, that because you incumber the priest with difficulties, you will extinguish the succession—No, the only consequence of that policy would be so to clog his ministry, that the public and the state shall derive from it no benefit.

Most wisely has our government made one advance to an establishment, by adverting to the education of the Roman Catholic Clergy; and there are those who cavil at the institution!—They do not consider (for intemperate fanaticism never reflects) that if they refused to have priests educated at their threshold, with the feelings and habits of their country, our very enemies would not cease to supply them. They would come to us, perhaps, from under the throne of Bonaparte. So again, you may, indeed, deprive yourself of the advantage of orderly and discreet clergymen, acting in the well regulated forms of episcopal gradation. In the present circumstances, the want of some fixed establishment will tend to produce that effect; but then the chasms will be filled from among those mendicants, whose institutions fit them for a precarious livelihood. Let the occasion be created, no question teachers will be found, who, rather than let the people out of their hands, will plunge them deeper than their simplicity or ignorance ever yet permitted them to go, in superstition or fanaticism; and surely it is not in the body of any nation, that resistance to that process is to be encountered. For myself, I would prefer, as the guides of my country, the decent, comfortable, parish priest, with his creditable bishop, possessing the feelings and respectability of a dignitary, rather than run the chance of, what at best must be a precarious casualty, conventual

feelings and institutions; men formed under foreign habits, and accustomed to direct their views to various foreign officers. Nothing, I repeat, could be worse imagined, than the practice of giving to this clergy a foreign education; but the conduct of government has, in this respect, been of late so liberal and prudent, that I find it unnecessary to enlarge upon the erroneous policy that formerly prevailed. A very munificent fund has been assigned by parliament under the patronage of the crown, and it must unquestionably be the fault of the persons at the head of the Roman Catholic religion in Ireland, if their clergy do not receive from thence a very adequate preparation for the ministry. But it seems to me that this very circumstance is an urgent reason to proceed further to the establishment of a regular provision. If, after a course of liberal institution in a well-endowed college, a man sees no prospect before him but mendicity and meanness, he will certainly look out for other pursuits. The college, established by parliament, may raise scholars, instructors of youth, and chaplains in opulent families; but missionaries it certainly will not produce, at least not in great abundance, unless persons of moderate zeal perceive some objects of preferment to attract their attention. Now it certainly can be no part of the policy of government, to incur a very heavy national expense, which, so far from attaining any end of public good, is to prove subversive of its own object.

The discouragement of the Catholic religion tends only to render it more and more unfit for our civil and social arrangements; in no degree to remove it. But if the change of religion were to be effected, as easily as it may be wished for, I subscribe to the opinion of very eminent observers, that the mere doctrines, the cool

habits,

habits, and unceremonious worship of reformed episcopacy are not likely to make proselytes of the Irish. The church of England may be very suitable to the calm devotion of a cultivated mind—It does not seem to possess a sufficient number of sensible objects to attract or to retain an ardent and unreflecting people, long accustomed to have their feelings soothed, and to be ruled by their impressions. I recollect no instance of a people, gained over by the clergy of an easy and well circumstanced establishment, or passing by their own impulse, from a religion in which the senses were much, to another in which they are but little gratified. The individual may be moved by his own considerations, but public bodies make no such measured revolution. Let us suppose it to be clear and ascertained, that reason stands precisely as the friends of the establishment represent it; but is there any great certainty that the people will resort, where wisdom points the way, or in what instance does it appear, that the indiscriminate mass of mankind are directed by their reason? The grand controversy which agitated this age seems to have been, whether in matters not touching us by what each individual considers a very close interest, we are guided by our reason or our impulse; and the revolution of France has decided against the agency of wisdom; so that granting the establishment to be as strongly fortified on that side, as its adherent can imagine, a favourable reception from a people not prepared or predisposed, is by no means more unequivocal.

The members of opulent ecclesiastical corporations never have been proficients in the arts and manners that captivate the multitude; I may then presume, that the established clergy of Ireland do not constitute an

exception. If a competition were instituted, they would be vanquished by the Methodists or Dissenters; because those forms are more congenial to the temper of ordinary men; and the teachers of them are more familiar with the practice of popular management. Now, in this case, the inconvenience of a double establishment is not removed; the necessity still remains of gratifying, or providing for a second body of clergymen; in that change there is no political benefit, and there is this mischief, that a transition so violent could scarcely be accomplished without unsettling the public mind, or producing some effervescence of fanactism, extremely dangerous to established order and authority.

If uniformity is not to be procured by the alteration of religion, it cannot, in any view of public or political good, be found desirable to supplant one subordinate establishment by another; but the measure will be probably attended by a violent ferment and a possibility of commotion, and thus the attempt becomes an imprudent enterprize. Let us take another view of the subject, and examine, how far the convenience of the Protestant clergy themselves is likely to be promoted, by suppressing the agency of their Roman Catholic fellow labourers. The Irish are much attached to certain attentions, which in fact are become characteristic; for example, they must in sickness be accommodated with the administration of religious rights, or they require on various occasions the practice of several ceremonies; with these the people would not dispense, even under a variation of some religious customs; they would yet require to be gratified in their favourite observances; as the missionaries, who gained over to christianity the ancient inhabitants of Europe, were often obliged to incorporate into their ritual, matters of innocent pre-

judice

judice and attachment, which it appeared frivolous to contest, and which had existed too long to be easily eradicated. The Protestant clergy have not been prepared for the intercourse which would be thus required from them; they have been fashioned, and accustomed to different duties. When I say that if the task were imposed, it would in all probability not be executed, I merely draw a sketch of human nature, without reflecting on the order, or the individuals. It is the condition and temper to which almost all men would be formed, or into which they would glide in like circumstances. The most favourable event of such revolution would be, that the beneficed clergy should seek out for curates from the same condition and habits of life, which now supply the greater part of the Romish ecclesiastics. These men would be essentially what the former are at present;—perhaps I shall be told that they would be better educated; I cannot accede to that, as a necessary consequence—the means of education would not be augmented, and in the present state of things, every advantage, which can be bestowed by education, and every good which can result from a circumspect attention to that concern, may be equally expected. On the part of government, care and vigilance alone are requisite; these would be just as incumbent, if a change were effected, and in the present state of things may be exerted, just as beneficially. Possess yourselves of the avenues to the human mind, and you may give what inclination you please to the public sentiment.

These considerations of mutual utility may serve to disarm the jealousies, which a system of rival establishments appears likely to generate among the respective ecclesiastical bodies, or their zealous votaries. If, which

I very

I very much doubt, it can be discovered, that in any part of Ireland the mass of the people have conformed to the establishment,—there, the second or subsidiary institution is rendered unnecessary. In the state of opinions or prejudices, if that expression pleases more, which I have described, and which indisputably prevails; whatever motives influence a state to interfere in maintaining, upholding, and protecting a system of religion, these all exist with respect to the Roman Catholic church of Ireland. The Romish clergy are in truth, no more than curates to their brethren of the establishment; discharging, without expense to their principals, duties, which, but for this interference, should have devolved upon the latter, and which they should either fulfil in person or pay for. On the other hand, the present Roman Catholic pastors have no claim to the property that was once annexed to situations, nearly resembling those which they fill at present. There is no natural connexion between the clerical function, and either tythes, or any other species of rent or possession; such union at one time subsisted with respect to a body of Catholic dignitaries; but it has been dissolved; the law, which confirmed or conferred the advantage, has withdrawn it; the individuals of this day have sustained no loss or injury; they have suffered no privation; they embarked in their present state of life without any prospect of this remuneration, and the reward upon which they did calculate, being unexpectedly augmented, they have still less reason to regret, that benefices, which would have never fallen to their own lot, are the property of deserving persons of another communion.—If the establishment were Roman Catholic, men of rank and influence would be attracted into the church, and would attain its preferments. The actual parish priests would still be

the

the inferior clergy; their provision would not be more liberal, neither would the application of the endowments be probably so exemplary as at present. The church of Rome imposes on her ministers certain reserves, with which the superior orders of society do not readily or universally comply; and we know from experience, that in Roman Catholic countries, whilst the general conduct of the lower clergy was in a very eminent degree laudable and virtuous, their dignified brethren presented frequent instances of dissipation and immorality.—Self denial is not the virtue of affluence, and there is not much to be gained by tempting men to the profession, who would inevitably decline the practice. The church of Ireland is rich, and its wealth was never applied to better purposes than those domestic ones, on which it is at this day expended. Those who deny the divine mission of the actual possessors, will at least allow them to be high in accomplishments, excellent in example, to be in short, a very superior and a very moral body of country gentlemen; they hold, by a tenure for life, what their neighbours have the additional advantage of transmitting in hereditary succession. A Roman Catholic clergyman might with equal propriety challenge lands, which were alienated from the church in the time of Henry VIII. which neither Mary nor James attempted to restore, and of which a great portion is now indiscriminately enjoyed by the zealous adherents of his own discipline. There is in fact, in the relative condition of these two ecclesiastical bodies, no ground for repining, different from that, which may arise in the breast of any moderate man at the condition of a more opulent neighbour. No combination of circumstances can be imagined, which is likely to invest the Catholic clergy, either with the establishment, or any portion of it. Not the enterprize of

1798; for had that atrocious effort proved successful, the non-Catholics would have predominated—they are more energetic and compact, and possess more of the mind of the country. There is probably but one point in which all parties would have agreed, totally to separate permanent and fixed property from the clerical function.

Accident, perhaps rather the nature of things bearing that appearance, usually makes a more rational and provident disposition, than what we consider to be the exertions of acute wisdom. Indeed an institution can seldom prevail for a length of time, in any country, without having originated in some public necessity, or assimilating to itself the wants and feelings of the people; such seems to have been the case with respect to the division of the Irish into religions. It is clearly the interest of all parties, to submit, without jealousy or cavil, to this distribution, and to the double establishment which it renders indispensable; and it should be the duty of policy and prudence, to place both denominations on a footing of good neighbourhood, to assign its duties to each and to render the means of fulfilling these duties more efficacious. The mixture of public endowment and private donation, the double dependance on the state and on the people, seem likely to produce a better effect, both on the assiduity and moderation of the popular clergy, than if they were on one hand selected and paid by the holders of the benefices, or any superior power; or on the other, that their views for favour or reward were solely directed to the people.

SECTION

SECTION II.

State of the Roman Catholic Clergy, as to the Difficulties of their Ministry.

Some foreigner has observed, how much more powerful would the British empire appear, if the national appellations of Irish and Scot were not invidiously contrasted with that of Englishman. In this branch of the empire we proceed still further, extending the cause of weakness, and refining on the principle of disunion, by our local factions of Protestant and Catholic. To rail at Popery, may gratify the vehemently adverse prejudices of one of these parties;* I cannot see that it conduces to any other purpose. Assuredly the number of adherents to any cause is not diminished, nor is their zeal abated, by rash and unfounded accusations; on the contrary, that mode of proceeding renders men more stedfast. If you attack a dogma of doctrine, every person of candour is aware, that the matter admits a contrariety of opinion: keeping therefore his own, he may indulge his neighbour without acrimony. When a people are told, that their teachers are so immoral as to inculcate sedition, this is a fact upon which no man can be deceived; his recollection, his feelings, and his experience bring the truth to him irresistibly. Such

* During the famous controversy on the subject of importing live cattle, it was gravely advanced, that Irish bullocks would not grow fat upon English grass. This assertion very much resembles the opinion sometimes promulgated in our days, that no treatment can make the Catholic loyal.

strains of invective,* as are sometimes uttered, proceed for the most part from a radical misapprehension of the subject; the essential mischief is, that they must frequently fall into the hands of men, who can practically refute the imputation, and who at the same time resent the charge, and commiserate those who are the objects of it. Persons who would, if left to themselves, have been indifferent, are provoked to animated adoption, and the more strenuous are wound up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. The crisis and situation in which we are placed, do not require to be magnified—they certainly open to our view important concerns and serious duties; every party must contribute to the heavy burdens which the state is necessitated to impose, and every party ought to exert itself with vigour, to protect the common cause of our happiness and independence. The object I propose to myself, and which I hope to contrast with those, who are tenacious of these divisions, is, to point to the measures, which, mitigating the evil of a great and permanent disunion, may render a large proportion of our people more disposed to be strenuous in the one instance, and cheerful in the other. In the redundant population of the Irish Catholics, there are materials, if they were so directed, to alarm the Gallic usurpation for its own existence; there is a class of men, numerous and energetic, patient of toil and prodigal of suffering;—these desirable qualities are at this moment, in some degree, auxiliary to our enemy, and converted against our own

* The Anti-Jacobin Review for July 1804 affirms, that an Irish Clergyman acts as a rebel agent in Paris, whilst nothing is more publicly known in Dublin, than that the individual mentioned went to Lisbon in a deplorable state of health, by the direction of physicians, and that he has resided there incessantly since his departure from this country.

own establishments. I do not adopt or recommend every course of proceeding that has been suggested by zeal, often false, canting, and corrupt; often indiscreet, improvident, and unenlightened; but let the character of the Irish be studied; let their reasonable wants and wishes be considered and accommodated: I press the counsel, of giving to the feeling of this people an inclination, and an impulse conformable to the interests of the empire, at a moment, which undoubtedly affords peculiar facilities to render the undertaking successful. If I were to express, what is my own conviction, that, the present war is waged between encroaching despotism and independence, I should describe principles not universally intelligible, or which do not apply to every understanding: It is a war between Bonaparte, divested of popular pretensions, and the ancient royal family of France, long respected by the Irish, contending for that right and justice, which is abetted by, which is in unison with, every sentiment and every prejudice; between Bonaparte, whose character and claims are not calculated to be acceptable to our people, and the Bourbons, to whom they are not without obligations, which have been felt, and may be enforced more extensively. And shall I be told, that in the humour of our Protestants, there is an impediment to this pursuit? Let this intelligent description of the Irish public be called to reflect, and let these matters be put fully and fairly to them; they will not continue to throw away the energies of their country—they will not make that sacrifice for the children's game of factious squabbles, the buffoonery of ribbons and parades, and the bauble of affected pre-eminence.

There are blemishes in the national character of Ireland, and difficulties in managing its population. I admit these facts, the existence of them indeed forms the ground-

work of my reasoning, and is the apology for this publication. I account for them, not by the preponderance of the Roman Catholic system, but by its failure to a certain extent; by the difficulties and discouragements, under which it has been placed, and which have prevented it from rendering to society the good of which it is susceptible. We have had among us, at least in the humble walks of life, precisely that degree of Catholicism, which sufficed to pre-occupy the mind, and prevent the admission of other modes of instruction, but was utterly inadequate to restrain the vehement passions of untutored man, and reduce his propensities within the limits of social institutions. This assertion will, perhaps, excite surprise; it is made in the front of a contrary opinion, which has been not a little cherished; of criminations, which have been long and sedulously repeated. It costs less to make such charges, than to investigate the occasion of them, and trace the evil to its real origin. The spleen of some is accommodated, and the indolence of a still greater number, who very cheerfully shift upon a name, they do not value, the consequence of their own misapprehensions. As it is of moment not only to assign the true cause, but fully to expose the fallacy of that which has been relied on, I shall recur again to these general accusations, having first stated as they arise, the circumstances in our condition, which denote or have produced the inefficiency of the Roman Catholic system; before the year 1778, it undertook to sustain moral purposes, but at present it has become inadequate to these; and still more is it insufficient for those social and civil relations, which the state may be induced to expect from the advances it has made to a reconciliation with this portion of its people. Before the repeal of the Popery laws, the Roman Catholics in Ireland were merely a society of religionists; as such they

were

were easily kept together, and the influence of their clergy was competent for its objects; subsequent to that event, the priest has become less able to fulfil his obligations, and although the regard for the forms and tenets has remained unaltered, the personal consideration of him, who expounds them, has declined essentially. The Roman Catholic clergy have no longer the same resources to procure a docile attention to their precepts; whilst they are called to act, upon a more extended sphere and upon a population, which, being infinitely increased in numbers, is, for that reason, more subject to be agitated by vehement passions, more easily misled, and more mutinous.

In the early part of the last century, to have been an Irish Roman Catholic, was a title to compassion on the continent; an ecclesiastic, endeavouring to perfect the attainments of his profession; had an extraordinary claim to that feeling, and various establishments piously promoted their accommodation. Towards the latter part of the century, the sentiment of commiseration insensibly wore away; the courts of France and Spain having tried * the Irish clergy during the American contest, and found them attached to the British sovereign, set the example of indifference. The favour shewn to the Irish, at length completely degenerated from the bounty of generous help, to the cold and humiliating condescension of charity, of which the liberal youth did not brook the acceptance.

* In 1780, when the French court made preparations to invade Ireland, very high offers were held out to any Irish priest, who would embark in the expedition; there were above two hundred on the foundation of the Irish college at Paris; I recollect that the proposal was made to them, and rejected unanimously and indignantly. I understand it was repeated through the entire French dominions with the same effect. Has this spirit fled? If it has passed away, who is responsible for a change so pernicious, or to what cause is it to be attributed?

ceptance.* The course of education, preparatory to holy orders, became of consequence less inviting and more costly, whilst the advantages of the situation diminished, and persons in easy circumstances, perceiving that an expensive education only conducted to a precarious establishment, became desirous to discourage any disposition in their children to undertake the clerical profession. Hitherto, the reverence, with which the clergyman was treated, constituted in a considerable degree, the inducement to engage in that condition. This flattering reception, the religious turn which persecution produces, and perhaps the difficulty of finding occupation for their youth,† amidst the discouragements and disabilities of the popery laws, filled the clerical order with numbers who augmented its reputation. Almost every Catholic family of note in the kingdom held it a duty to assign some children to the service of religion; but this reverence has very much abated; with the age of money, new notions have been introduced, more conformable to the spirit of a money-making people.

The necessaries of life, during the period I have referred to, were at a low price, and the practice of hospitality very universal; a payment in money was not much sought for, and was not requisite. The priest lived freely with his parishioners, the most respected inmate of whatever house he thought fit to visit; the severity of the law, and the inquisition of the magistrates impending over his head, only served to render him an object of more endearing solicitude to the people. From

1770

* Possibly the greater diffusion of property in Ireland contributed to this rejection.

† Educating younger sons to the church, or the service of foreign princes, was also used as a means of keeping the family inheritance entire, and defeating the gavel laws.

1770 to 1780, the old hostility of the sects abated. Roman Catholics of property assimilated themselves to Protestants of the like condition. The pursuit of the clergy was disused, and the laws grew obsolete. After 1780, the volunteer institutions drew more close the intercourse, and approximation of habits between the parties; the Catholics ceased gradually to be that austere and distant body of religionists, and as they entered more cheerfully with their neighbours into the business and gaities of life, they grew out of a minute attention to, and respectful depandance on, their clergy.—The priest was left to provide for himself, and remitted, like the pastors of other churches, to his own means his perquisites and his duties; but the assistance, which he derived from his congregation, was not proportioned to the improvement of their condition, or to the variation of his circumstances. As the affluent Catholics became cold to their clergy, those naturally looked to another quarter for the respect which to all men is very grateful. This tribute was tendered by the lower people, or by the comfortable peasantry, who newly emerged from that description. The consequence was such as might well have been expected, the priests betook themselves to those classes, and by that step, declined still more in civil estimation; I speak of what occurred, not indeed universally, but in a considerable degree. The restrictive effect of the pastoral character did not derive any aid, from this dependance, for much of what was necessary, and more of what was acceptable; from the loss of consideration with the upper classes, and a too familiar intercourse with their inferiors.

Under the same circumstances, a perverse jealousy of the Roman Catholic clergy grew up among the magistracy,

gistracy, and most active of the middling country gentlemen. Those persons were for the most part the considerable rentors, or the agents of the great proprietors; they were those, who, coming immediately into collision with the common people, had to sustain the reproaches, which that class of men are ever ready to utter on their occasional disappointment. An improvident encrease of numbers beyond the occupation, which the country afforded, reduced the estimation of men, and the value of labour. The cottager attributed the severity of his lot (which certainly was not softened by all the solicitudes and attentions which we observe in the sister island) to the exactions of the resident middle men. The breach between the parties was rendered still more wide by turbulence on the one side, and legal executions on the other. Those, who felt and resented the want of cordiality, and of that lead and influence, to which they deemed themselves to be entitled, supposed they had only to blame the rivalship of the Romish clergy: with great assiduity, and frequently with success, they applied themselves to diminish in the public mind the credit of this body, and when any popular or mobbish motions arose out of the circumstances of the country, it was not unusual to set all down to the account of the clergy. Thus a new responsibility was imposed, the original recompense was in a great measure withdrawn, and no substitute provided. An alteration of manners and feelings took place, by which the Catholic clergy were considerable losers. Not being borne forward, by the advancing circumstances of the country, they did not preserve their proportion in the public esteem; their consideration was lessened, their situation became more perplexed, their ministry more difficult; and the vacancies, occurring in their body, were not filled so easily,

nor

nor in every case, from a class so well prepared for civil duties. They were, indeed, exempted from legal perils, which had been frequently eluded, and which it was at all times honorable to encounter; but, in the place of them, arose an affectation of contempt, derision, and the hostility of a jealous alienation. These things bore more heavily upon the public morals of the country, and touched more closely the intercourse of the pastor and flock, because the state of society, from the time of the volunteer establishment to the rise of the popery question in 1791, gave to the Protestants of a certain property, whose feelings I have thus described, free access to their Roman Catholic fellow citizens. How much more wise and politic would it have been, if those whose administration or possession of power in provincial jurisdictions enabled them to act with considerable effect, had afforded their countenance to the religion they saw before them?—but far otherwise; the magistrate did not in any degree co-operate—his temper was hostile to the favorite teachers of the people—if he interfered, it was to weaken the force of their precepts, to deride and undervalue their example; and all this improvident rant was distinguished by the appellation of liberality. It was no easy matter to manage or instruct a scattered and redundant population; acted upon by a very remiss and irritating police, without any of the helps by which the cause of morality is usually promoted. The Irish must have been impressed with an innate love of virtue beyond any people that ever existed, if thus left to themselves, they had not been corrupted; and their clergy must have been something more than human, if they had fulfilled all the expectations that seemed to be entertained from their ministry; and yet how unreasonably has this clergy in

our times been censured, because they did not effect all the moral good, which might have been looked for from their exertions, under the most propitious circumstances? censured even, for not having surmounted difficulties, created by the very men who accused them of insufficiency, or of something much more criminal. When the public peace has been interrupted, the fashion was, without ceremony or enquiry, to imputate all the mischief to the priest—" he might have prevented," said they, " if he did not encourage the disturbance." The nature of his influence was totally misunderstood, and the extent of it was rather measured by the spleen, than by the observation of his accusers.

If the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland were clear from external inconvenience, and that the paths to their ministry were in all other respects perfectly open and level, they are to contend with internal difficulties, fully adequate to defeat the social usefulness of their function. In the first instance, the division of parishes does not correspond to the present scale of population. The original distribution of parishes in Ireland, of which the names alone are preserved by both churches, was sufficiently compact, and certainly denotes, that when christianity took effect, the country was well peopled. At the present day, a number of these denominations is formed into an union, and assigned to a single pastor—among the Protestants, because a single clergyman was sufficient for the cure—among the Catholics, because formerly, still more than at present, the cure afforded no more than a single maintenance. After the revolution, the country was wasted, poor and depopulated, and the system of pasturing the lands, which prevailed for sixty or seventy years, left the evil without remedy. The division, so far as regards

the

the Catholics, probably took place under these circumstances ; those, who made it, only considered the small number who were to contribute to the clergyman's support, and to whom his functions were to be administered. The private precept and public exhortation of the pastor are lost, amidst the laborious and multiplied duties, which he has to discharge ; he cannot afford leisure either to assist in forming the minds of youth, or to superintend the morals or edification of mature age ; and it is probably because they are thus abandoned to themselves ; because they want the guidance of him, who would be considered a venerable friend, and who alone is capable of making an impression on them, that these headstrong and impetuous passions, which mislead the lower Irish, are so very prevalent. It is not possible to devise any corrective for the propensity to intoxication, the facility to engage in lawless enterprises, and the other familiar vices that deform the face of our country, so effectual, as the influence, the frequent conversation with, and minute attentions of that person, to whose voice the people may be induced to listen, because they have attached to him the opinion of a sacred and exalted character.

At the present day, the charge of each clergyman is not so much a parish, as a district, and comprehends a range so wide, that the attendance on the sick, and a huddled ceremony of confession fill and consume his time, and keep him continually in action. Consolation in death is a prominent feature of the Christian religion ; the man who believes that he is to be judged by a being, to whom supplication and penitence are acceptable, must, as he perceives the period of his judgment approach, be more earnest in disposing himself to meet it.—Perhaps the Irish, as being thoughtless and negligent in health, are

more tenacious on the bed of sickness; this certainly is an object of the highest attachment, and sanctioned by all the laws of prejudice and custom. A family falls into lasting disgrace, if any of its members is suffered to die without calling in the clergyman's assistance; and it is in the priest an irreparable forfeiture of his claim to esteem or reputation to be found remiss in exhibiting his aid, even to the meanest and most wretched object, and under circumstances of the greatest possible disgust and danger. With an injunction so powerfully enforced, there is no temporising; there is, of course, no negligence—it is, undoubtedly, a most humane and beneficent exercise of duty; but, as things are at present arranged, it supersedes other cares, more calculated to form the habits and the mind, and on which more depends, at least, as to our temporal accommodation. The Roman Catholic religion recommends or enjoins many ritual observances, which, as subordinate, are excellent helps and auxiliaries to morality; but here they become concerns of sole or superior attention, and are practically adopted, as the essence of the system, rather than a co-operating accessary. The religion is reduced to a mere series of observances, and degenerates into superstition. I have already observed, the attention of the Catholic clergy is sufficient to preserve a zealous regard for their particular discipline; but their situation is incompetent to draw this discipline to the perfection of which it is capable. The actual predilection for the forms of the church of Rome, and the advantage it enjoys of holding the people by confirmed attachment, render them inaccessible to the introduction of any other system, whilst this daily declines, in point of civil utility, and becomes more unapt for social purposes, by the want of countenance and support from public authority, and generally from the superior orders

of

of the community. I must add, in justice, my total conviction, that this support is not maliciously with-held, but merely because the matter has not been explained to that class, from whom the assistance, in a great measure must emanate.

I shall select, for example, the practices of auricular confession and exhortation; this latter common to all our christian societies; the former peculiar to the Roman Catholics. Confession furnishes, without doubt, an admirable means of exciting religious sentiments, and preserving a sense of our moral obligations; but it seems to me, that the effect must be frustrated, in a great measure, by the manner in which this rite is exhibited to our rustics. It is habitually frequented, at the two seasons of Easter and Christmas;—as the time approaches, the clergyman assigns a day and a place for each division of his parish; thither the whole population of the quarter repairs; a morning is the utmost extent of attendance that can be afforded, and between the shortness of the time, and the number who present themselves, that, which ought to be a solemnity of pause and reflexion, becomes a sort of turbulent, unmeaning festivity. Now this institution is certainly susceptible of an abuse, when resorted to inconsiderately, and by persons who do not understand it; and nothing more probable, than that several will be found in this predicament, where the difficulties of explanation and instruction are already so very great, and on the encrease with the extending population of the country. A Roman Catholic, acquainted with the doctrines of his church, considers the chair of his confessor to be a place of humiliation, of candid and penitent acknowledgment, paternal advice, reproof and instruction; but will these awful truths strike the mind without preparation? unquestionably they will not, and I do not see

how

how the preparation is to be effected, where there is perhaps one clergyman to more than a dozen miles of a populous country, unprovided with schools or places of resort for the younger part of his congregation. Must I be so sanguine as to expect, that, under these circumstances, there will be no misunderstanding of this delicate, this two-edged observance?—Must I suppose that none will come to consider it as an easy atonement for offences? My own observation is very much in favour of the salutary and restrictive effect of confession;—those, who have been educated with reverence for the practice, make the disuse of it the first step to a deviation from the paths of moral rectitude. I bear this testimony in truth and candour. My judgment of the divine institution is not calculated to affect any person, who is not impressed with a similar opinion, but my testimony may be received by all, as to the effects of a practice which does and must exist, and which I have better opportunities to appreciate than others, who express themselves on this subject authoritatively. What these suppose to be the constant practice, I admit to be a possible abuse in cases of gross neglect and radical ignorance; such is the whimsical nature of our present situation, that we seem to invite the abuse, and make provision for the ignorance, for the rite is in full exercise, with every possible provocation or facility to misapply it. What a tremendous profanation, in the eyes of a Roman Catholic, of a sacred institution?—what a mischief in the mind of every man, that any oportunity should be afforded to reconcile the people with a breach of their duties!

Perhaps, one of the most impressive methods of instruction, that can be imagined, was the preparation of children for their first communion, which annually took place

place in a French village *, under the inspection of the curate. I do not know whether the rural manners of England include any practice of this tendency. In Scotland, the constant visitation and converse of the clergyman, for which he is responsible to the synod, must be productive of similar advantage. In Ireland, nothing of the kind occurs, at least not in the country; nor do I see, in the state of things I have described, how it possibly could be effected. I do not suppose that any mode of cultivation will render men unexceptionably strict, nor for my part am I desirous to see them eternally canting and whining over their devotions; but there can be little doubt that persons, who are induced at an early period to reflect, and upon whom strong impressions have been made, continue, through life, more inclined to correctness of conduct, and more susceptible of good dispositions. There is an elevation of mind in those, upon whom some pains have been timely bestowed, and perhaps our lower people stand more in need of this than of any other quality whatever.

On the Sabbath, the inhabitants of this tract of country, denominated a parish, are convened in a multitudinous congregation; such of them, at least, as are within hearing of the clergyman †, might now be exhorted; the general principles of christianity, and their own

* It is a mistake to imagine, that the French before the revolution were so very profligate, as the manners of their large towns bespoke them. Nothing could certainly be more corrupt than their cities and the environs of them; but nothing more decent and innocent than the rustic manners, especially far in the interior of the provinces.

† As a country chapel is seldom sufficient to contain one-fourth of the congregation, they are to be seen spread over the country for the extent of a quarter of a mile. I recollect a witty remark by a gentleman who witnessed this spectacle, that they seemed to receive the word of God by the touch, like electricity.

own peculiar practices enforced and expounded; but the clergyman has generally to read prayers, for two or three congregations, each several miles distant from the other; when he meets some of them, he is too much exhausted to make the exertion; and another necessity supervenes in a great many instances;—at the several seasons of collecting his dues, Sunday is the only time when the priest can solicit for the contribution he must subsist on; he is obliged to state his own wants, and reprimand the tardiness of his parishioners. In this concern, the time is consumed which should be allotted for a sermon. The introduction of his pecuniary pretensions throws upon the divine worship an air of burlesque, and weakens the effect of instruction, if it be attempted; and yet so reluctantly are the contributions paid, that the priest who hesitates to press and urge for his dues, will find himself miserably deficient. The assiduous repetition of the claim gives an appearance of extortion, and the very necessity of it must create, in the clergyman himself, dispositions and habits by no means liberal, and very often inconsistent both with the temper and the dignity that we justly expect in that delicate and important station.

Where the clergyman is necessitated to live a great deal at the houses of his parishioners; where he is obliged to consider this resource an essential part of his provision, I conceive his condition to be replete with inconvenience. He is withdrawn from the habits of recollection, in which a man of that grave profession should desire to bestow a large portion of his time; he is led into a connexion with the affairs of the world; he is under inducements and temptations, in many respects, to temporize. I do not mean to insinuate, that very liberal intercourse ought not to subsist between the

pastor

pastor and his parishioners; but the difference is considerable, between a man entertained as a guest, and one admitted as a dependant. Whilst I prepare these sheets for the press, I have learned that such is the difficulty of supplying the Roman Catholic ministry with clergymen, and so considerable the diminution of their numbers, as to give occasion farther to extend the district in the charge of each individual. It is needless to urge how much the evils I have described will be aggravated by this necessity. The zeal for the Roman Catholic religion is as great, and the number of fervent practisers of Roman Catholic devotion still greater than at any former period * ; I can only attribute this failure to the perplexities which Roman Catholics at the head of families have discerned in the condition of their priesthood. I shall sum in a few words what I have endeavoured to describe more at large ;—it is the want of countenance from the superior and most respected classes; the want of protection against suspicion and insult; the want of something fixed and regular to stimulate hope and sustain exertion. I shall proceed to offer some expedients by which these defects may be supplied ; and I do not think, in that event, that candidates for the situation will hesitate to offer.

* I mean that the middle class of families, who are above ignorance, and below corruption, has very considerably augmented in Ireland; and that this class is more likely to produce subjects intent on devotion, and ready to betake themselves to a life of stricter religious practices.

SECTION III.

State of the Roman Catholic Clergy, with a View to the Arrangements that might be entered into, in order to render their Ministry more useful.

HAVING stated the inconveniences under which the Roman Catholic religion in Ireland labours, I proceed, in the course of my subject, to consider the means whereby these inconveniences may, in some measure, be redressed, and by which the interference of the state may place a system, which I apprehend to be very necessary, in a condition of greater public utility and accommodation. Some persons may conclude, that the state fulfils its duties, by providing for the people a moral and correct establishment—this, however, is matter of opinion; the establishment may possess infinite merits, and notwithstanding prove of small avail, when those, for whose acceptance it is intended, cannot be induced to esteem it.—Beef is very excellent food, but a tribe of Gentoos must not be left to starve, because they refuse to eat it. What I recommend is by no means, in my judgment, a claim of right—I do not see that right extends further, than the privilege of worship, unrestrained by penalties, and unmolested; but there may be an urgent injunction of prudence, where there is no more direct and positive obligation. The Roman Catholic clergy are already distinguished by many characters of an establishment; they want this one of connexion with government; they pos-

sess

sess an influence, which although exaggerated and misunderstood, is undoubtedly considerable—they are capable, if upheld, of extending that influence more widely, and of conferring many benefits on society, which, as we are circumstanced, cannot be procured from any other quarter, or upon other terms. These motives suggest, indeed to me they seem in somewhat of an imperative form to enjoin, that the views of this body should be directed to the supreme magistrate; that they should be brought to that feeling, which identifies the individual with the state and connects him with the stability of government by somewhat more than a cold, a remote, and uninteresting sense of duty. The idea, present to my mind, is to follow the inclination to the Catholic religion, where this inclination prevails, and to ingraft on it the moral and social virtues, and advantages of Christianity. I apprehend the design may be forwarded with greater facility, by falling in with the old and fixed attachments of the country, than by an attempt to communicate practices and doctrines, which are not familiar. There are persons so very adverse, that they will not entertain my proposal without repugnance, and will be ready to suppose for, or impute to, me, sectarian views or predilections. I fully and formally disavow, that I am actuated by such feelings. No man need hesitate to acknowledge a lively interest in the welfare of a communion which he esteems and has adopted; but these are private considerations, which it were presumption and folly to think of extending into a general question. If the state of the Roman Catholic clergy merely concerned that description of religionists with whom I am classed, I should take my place within the limits of my own society, and there contribute my quota of exertion; but it is no such thing —it is the affair, not of any party or subdivision, but of

he monarchy, of the empire, and emphatically—of Ireland. It is not a question of more or less accommodation to any particular description, not a matter of compliment to a religious society, however numerous and respectable. During the reign of projects which, after 1782, succeeded to the wordy war of political contention, we were struck with the defects and wants of our people, schemes of education were broached, which were found impracticable or ineffectual, because they did not begin from the proper source—the apt and judicious application of the Roman Catholic religion; under this head are comprised, and under it alone, are to be sought, the means of educating the lower orders of the Irish people; of forming and training those to peaceable dispositions, to settled habits, and sober industry, upon whose exertions society leans for the extension, and the use of property; and by whose vices that property is rendered neither a matter of public resource, nor of enjoyment to the individual. I can expect attention alone, as I sustain myself by enforcing these considerations.

I must again offer my protest, as to the manner in which the subject I propose has frequently been thought and spoken of. We will gain over, say some, the Romish clergy, by a distribution of money, because they may be induced to assist government with their vigilance, with their information. Far other are the views in which these sentiments are submitted—I should regret to see the Roman Catholic clergy engaged to the state for any services, except those which are connected with a decorous sense of relative duties and of propriety. I should certainly have my feelings for the degradation of their function, but it applies more immediately to the tenor of these observations, to remark, that if they outstep that line, the very objects that are held in view, will be defeated.

feated. I should wish, that by the prudence of this body, the people were reconciled to the authorities under which they are to live—I should wish that evil were anticipated by their care, and the mind formed to virtuous purposes, which, if left without cultivation, might become criminal. I wish them to be rendered creditable and efficient, because such is their situation, that it must become mischievous and fatal in the extreme, unless upon it are strongly impressed the characters of respectability and reputation—I should rather uphold and confirm than bribe away their influence. It forms no part of my project to convert ministers of religion into spies or instruments of police; I do not treat or consider them as demagogues to be got under a mercenary subjection. In this manner I know the subject of a provision for the Roman Catholic clergy has frequently been mentioned.—Leave them as they are, unless you prepare to render them more respectable, and to place them in a condition more suitable to their functions. Do not touch the means of settlement and materials of religion which exist, unless you are assured that your interference will improve them.

It is a sort of preliminary consideration, or at least presses most forward in my mind, that expenditure is not so essential as regulation; money may be given liberally, or even profusely; but it will be given in vain, unless the proceeding be accompanied by method, reflection, and system—unless every part be made to correspond with the entire view and design—unless, in short, the movers of the measure act with a perfect knowledge of the matter in which they are engaged, of the body whom they have to manage, of the people, their sentiments, and necessities. Let it be promulgated, that government will take charge of this establishment; numbers of the laity will immediately hold themselves

selves excused from the accustomed contribution; if then the sum allotted to each clergyman fall short of his usual income, or if, from injudicious management, any perceive themselves losers by what was intended as a bounty, not a feeling of obligation, but very serious discontent will be the consequence. It would be yet worse to assign a fund, and leave it to be scrambled for among a crowd of pretenders. Artifice and intrigue would interfere; some would obtain more, others less, than their due proportion; the one would not be relieved, the others would be diverted from the sphere of their duties into worthless and unprofitable indolence; all would become caballers. A salary, unconnected with professional exertions, constitutes a condition of unexcited indolence, in which it is the tendency even of the wisest and best men, insensibly to relax. If the Roman Catholic parochial clergy, degenerating to that temper, forego their accustomed attentions, the public will cast their eyes elsewhere; they will not cease, as I have already observed, to be Roman Catholics, but they will adhere to other teachers of that religion, with whom the government must find it impossible to be connected, both because the pursuit would be endless, and because the persons, who thus present themselves, would be less within the controul and management of episcopal authority. If you permit the ordinary clergy, whom it is easy to combine and direct, to forfeit the favour of the people by negligence or apathy, an irregular and utterly unmanageable description will intrude, and with more probability of success, as the laity will be better able to reward them, when exonerated from the dues of their usual pastors. The disposition of the public to pious observances will be seized on, and converted to the purposes of imposition or fanaticism. I conceive it not

at

at all impossible, that the public may be put to enormous expence, and the superintendance of the plan and of the fund assigned to most excellent deserving men; to persons of the very best intentions; yet the design may be totally frustrated, and religion be placed in a condition more unfavourable than without such interference; of this nature was an error committed in the establishment which has been settled at Maynooth. No intentions could possibly be more laudable, than those by which the government was influenced on that occasion, and the persons selected to direct the institution were among the most honourable in society; but these persons were not concerned in the original design or in the details; the ministers, who carried the project into effect, had not an accurate view of the subject, and they consulted with persons who were incompetent to inform them. The Roman Catholic religion might have received the assistance designed for it at a much less expence, or the sum bestowed might have been rendered a means of more extended good, and productive of stronger feelings of gratitude. The government should have contented itself in providing the necessary buildings, appointing officers and professors with endowments adequate to ensure a succession, and erecting a limited number of foundations in reward of merit, or in aid of deserving necessity; there, in my apprehension, it should have stopped. The bounty, which supports at the public expence an entire * college, and every individual

* Perhaps the original slip may be repaired, by taking into the house an indefinite number of pupils, destining themselves for orders, to be kept at private expence, still preserving two hundred places, the actual number of the establishment, as a royal bounty, which should be filled according as vacancies occur, in the order of merit or of seniority.

It is certain, that no man will think of paying for his son, if it be held out, that persons who offer for the church are to be educated gratis; neither will

individual of its members, is too indiscriminate; the emotions, to which it might be expected to give rise, are lost by being general; no man is obliged by what every man partakes of. The public feels little sympathy with what was considered from its infancy to be an opulent and independent establishment. If the plan I mention had been pursued, the zeal of several of the Roman Catholic laity, and of most of the clergy, would have been called into action—they would have been emulous to select and support deserving subjects; many would have entered on the establishment, who would have been able, with very little aid, often without any, to defray the expences of their education; the public would take a lively interest in an institution, which leaned upon it in some measure for support;—it would cherish the establishment; it would communicate with, and be guided by, its members, whilst the situations provided by the crown would give an inclination and an impulse to the entire body. In the rapid succession of collegiate preferment, many would receive the distinction, all would hope to attain it; the feelings of youth would be directed by times to the head of the state, and to the objects connected with his security; they would be directed to these views by gratitude often renewed; by the very pride, which the sense of having been distinguished would excite in their bosoms. I consider it an undeniable fact, that if among one hundred persons, you distribute ten places of preferment, to which all may in rotation aspire, you will receive in return more animated exertions, and a more decided support,

will persons, who can afford to pay, destine their children for that condition, if they perceive that men of no particular recommendation are brought up free of expence, and start with equal advantage. One of the principles I endeavour to impress, is, that Catholics of circumstance should be led to give their sons to the church.

port, than if you confer upon the entire hundred a favour, which they are assured can never be augmented: but, with respect to the collegiate establishment, the die is cast; it would at present be ruinous to retract; the public have been formed to believe, that no co-operation on their part is necessary, and it would be a difficult, indeed an impracticable, enterprise to lead them to a different sentiment. In the present circumstances, it would be more prudent to let this matter remain as it is, and to take advantage in another way of the unoccupied zeal of religious Roman Catholics; and I press with more earnestness for proceeding in the instance before us with a perfect knowledge of the subject, because it appears to me to open an opportunity of national settlement, which, if misapplied, is irretrievable.

If this subject were not critical, if it had not been repeatedly opened by persons, whose wisdom would have proved ineffectual, and whose designs, however excellent in intention, would have been frustrated by their inapplicability, I should hesitate much to mix my thoughts in the family of projects;—I am aware of the ridicule which awaits on plans, and far from insinuating, that any I may devise should deserve to be adopted. But my notions, however imperfect, may serve to put in motion the ideas of others; in that hope, I shall state the hints that have occurred to me; and minds of very superior fertility and discernment may be enabled, from the information furnished by a Roman Catholic, to proceed towards somewhat of a consistent and salutary arrangement. Not a little, of what I should be desirous to propose, must depend on manners; for example, the aversion to a Catholic clergyman, which men of local influence and authority are very prone to manifest. This disposition must be discouraged by the example of

the government and of men of consequence; by instructions to magistrates severely to repress outrages offered to these persons, to afford them the full protection of the law, and to guard them against capricious jealousies and suspicions. Instances arising in the late times of general heat ought not certainly to be taken without several allowances; but I could adduce many examples of very brutal demeanor with respect to clergymen of great learning, piety, and of the most exemplary and decorous manners *. Faults of this kind occur most frequently where the sects live apart from each other: they are also to be found, where the practice is preserved of placing authority exclusively in the hands of Protestants of inferior rank and education †. As this practice falls into disuse, so will the evils that arise from it. The provocations given by adventuring justices of peace, by constables and parish officers, under a great affectation of zeal for order and government, have contributed, at least as much as any other circumstance, to alienate the people from established authority, to render existence and property precarious, and to convulse the British empire in Ireland.

The first provision is, for the personal security of this body of ecclesiastics; the next care should be, in my opinion, directed to its general respectability, and to supply incentives for exertion; the third, to the independence of each of its members; this provision, however,

* Many instances have been mentioned to me, where country gentlemen, or what would be considered in England the first class of farmers, have, on losing property, sent a dictatorial message to the priest, directing him to discover the facts for them. These are strokes of folly; but the receiver of the message may happen to be no wiser than the sender.

† Whilst one description is regarded with jealousy, those who are to watch over them should be the men most likely, from their situation, to act with discretion and impartiality.

ever, to be in no wise separated from the faithful and assiduous discharge of the duties of consolation and instruction.

The Catholic hierarchy in Ireland consists of twenty-six prelates,* and the warden of Galway, a dignitary enjoying episcopal jurisdiction. A moderate income annexed by government to each of these stations, and to a certain number of dignitaries in each diocese, together with the offices and professorships of the Royal College already founded, would, I think, be found sufficient to induce Roman Catholics of good condition to permit their children, when so inclined, to engage in the ministry; and to prevail on persons of pretensions, who have engaged, not to abandon the original sphere of their duties. The advantage must be incalculable, in forming the general character of the order, if you can draw within it, and afterwards retain in the country, men of education and talents; men who are accustomed to be respected, and who have the feelings incidental to that habit; men, whose early or whose long-continued impressions have been liberal.

The number of Roman Catholic parish priests in Ireland actually exceeds one thousand; it would probably be expedient, for the reasons and purposes already stated, to encrease the number by an addition of about one-half. It must be recollected, that the entire project is a compromise with opinions, and it will be therefore not extraordinary, to lay down as a rule of undeniable propriety, that this arrangement should be amicably adjusted, in their own way, with the incumbents, and with the bishops, their legal and regular superiors; if

* The title of Dean is preserved in many dioceses, but without any advantage annexed to it.

attempted otherwise to be carried into effect, the design, whatever may be its merits, would not be effectual. Upon the contracted scale of duties which this allotment leaves to each clergyman, he would have leisure to oversee the education of youth, to visit his parishioners, to exercise a becoming degree of vigilance over their general morals, and to instruct them, more minutely than he can at present, in the principles and practices of Christianity. This concern ought to be rigidly enforced by the Bishops—the Scotch clergy, under the control of their several Presbyteries, and of public opinion, (which is very much alive in that country) discharge this care with great assiduity, and scarcely among any people are great crimes or great misery so uncommon. Before the revolution, the French parochial clergy were enabled to apply themselves to the lower class of people, pretty much in the manner I recommend — each pastor had a school-master under his orders, who was paid from some public establishment; he was personally acquainted with every individual of his parish, and frequent in his visitation of them; out of the circle of the large cities, the lower classes of the French were a moral people, simple, and not addicted to any intemperance or irregularity; and nothing could be more endearing than the bonds of attachment which united them to their pastors.

The expense of his peculiar worship, to a tolerably substantial farmer or mechanic, in the most opulent and Roman Catholic countries, amounts to about five shillings annually; the common labourer is, in the greater number of places, excused; where he is required to contribute, the accustomed rate is one shilling;* this in-

* This payment being for the convenience of collection usually received at

includes the contribution of the entire family, and for this the priest is bound to attend them when sick, even at the most unseasonable hours, and to administer confession when they apply to him. He is also to keep his chapel in order, to celebrate divine service, and preach on Sundays and festivals. In what I have denominated the Northern district, the emoluments of the Catholic parish priest are on an average, as I apprehend, from about thirty to fifty pounds per year; in the other parts of Ireland, these emoluments run from sixty to ninety pounds, * varying with the opulence or with the customs of particular districts. In Munster the perquisites are highest, on account of a greater liberality in paying for marriages, which immemorial usage has established; the towns produce from one hundred to one hundred and twenty, or one hundred and thirty pounds per annum; in some very few instances they go so high as two hundred pounds. The bishops receive a small donation from every marriage, and a voluntary assessment of one to three guineas from each parish priest in the diocese. The bishop has always one parish; in some instances, where his receipts are inadequate to his expenses, he holds a second by *commendam*, which he administers by a curate. The bishop usually visits his diocese in each year, and holds assemblies of his clergy, called conferences, for the purposes of communication, discipline, and instruction. There is perhaps a single instance of a bishop, whose living exceeds four hundred pounds;

at Easter, when the people assemble for confession, gave rise to a notion among the Irish Protestants, (who are inconceivably uninformed as to the religion practised at their doors) that this was the price of absolution.

* But observe, that this competence is formed by assigning duties and a district, to which the priest cannot attend sufficiently; give to each a practicable charge, and they cannot subsist.

pounds ; in general the income of this class, including the parish, amounts to about that sum in the best circumstanced districts. In other places they receive from three hundred to three hundred and fifty pounds. I make these calculations without any documents to assist me ; they are probable conjectures, founded merely on my knowledge of the country, and my observation. A return of the income of the Catholic clergy was made to government in the year 1801, but I have not had the advantage of correcting it by my surmises. I have, however, often understood, that these returns were generally given at the highest, in consequence of some ideas that prevailed, and some expectations that were excited.

The stipend levied for the parochial clergy of the Catholics thus appears adequate to the comfortable subsistence of a single man ; but it its precarious ; it is obtained by mean solicitation ; it induces habits inconsistent with any degree of firmness or elevation of mind, such as you would desire in the minister and magistrate of morality ; such as you would emphatically desire, where a rude and unreflecting people are to be formed to more tractible habits, to be guided and not unfrequently resisted—it is not a necessitous, but a dependant and degraded order.

The towns are in a good measure to be set apart from the present description. There is a sort of regular assessment in these places, which, with the occasional dues for marriage and christening, and the kind and generous devotion of procuring and requiting prayers for the deceased, renders the condition of the clergy tolerably reputable and commodious. In the North of Ireland, the Roman Catholics are, with inconsiderable exceptions, the poorest of the people ; this circumstance accounts for the

the small recompence of the clerical function in that district, and for the greater difficulty in obtaining it. The main fund in the North arises from a pitiable, and almost ludicrous exhibition at funerals, which indeed daily declines, but which ought altogether to be removed, as an impediment to civilization. I cannot censure the priest, who has no other means of subsistence; but whilst he lives by such means, no respect or credit can be annexed to his character, especially in this age, when we advance so rapidly after our neighbours in the refinements or decencies of life, and when we are so much accustomed to confine our sentiments of respect to those, who are placed by their situation above the appearance of necessity. In Connaught there is a very considerable body of Roman Catholic gentlemen, and the lower class are, with few or no exceptions, of the same religion; but the former are above attending minutely to the occasions of the clergy, and the latter are too poor to be of any assistance—the substantial peasant, who labours and thrives by his industry, is not as yet so common in that district. The gentlemen, if the priest does not render himself objectionable, are ready to give him a liberal and hospitable use of their houses, and are, I believe, accustomed to make presents in kind of the several articles of agricultural produce, but they are very little formed to the notion of assigning him a pecuniary and independent remuneration.

In the remainder of the country, (what I have denominated the second and third districts, see page 2) the face of society does not vary essentially—the prevalence of agriculture in this tract has formed a very numerous class of substantial and comfortable farmers; they are not prompt in their contributions—they require to be pressed, solicited, nay teazed; it is however in one shape or other

obtained

obtained from them, and where the priest has a farm, the working people, by immemorial usage, assign him a day in each season, for the several operations of husbandry; this custom (which once was universal), as well as the donations of produce I have just noticed, have fallen very much into disuse, since the demand for labour has encreased, and since the value, both of that and of articles of produce, has been enhanced considerably.

I have now traced my subject through a detail of matters, trifling perhaps, and frivolous in the eyes of many, but surely swelled to the first importance by their effects upon society. The greater number of these circumstances are placed at two great a distance from the statesman to reach his knowledge, and are too minute to be noticed, unless by an observer, who has been in some measure a party to them. These, as it appears to me, hold a foremost station among the pressing wants of this portion of the empire, and indicate the sound and rational order of amendment, Attention to small objects and necessities, may, and certainly will, if pursued duly and in time, evolve and bring to maturity, the germ of improvement, must I say of civilization; it will be stifled if the soil be prodigally enriched. The profusion of money is, I confess, above all other things, that which I dread and deprecate.

I would simply propose to introduce into our Roman Catholic ecclesiastical system, the principle of fixed property and the principle of preferment. I would reduce the duties to a certain compass, and allow leisure to fulfil them; some minor objects occur which may be turned to advantage in the correction of our people, and which therefore become momentous.

I have already noticed the huts or hovels, which occasionally appear to be dedicated to the worship of God, according

according to the forms of the Roman Catholic discipline. Indeed I am given to understand, that in a few instances the service is performed under a ditch without any other shelter. This humiliation is not disgraceful to the people, it is their misfortune; but certainly there is neither honour nor ornament to the country, nor is it creditable to its gentry, that the worship of the God, whom we all adore, upon principles in which we are unanimous, and according to rights not very foreign from those of the predominant or established church, should be, under all the circumstances of ancient and popular following, thus meanly and shamefully conducted. I would abate those nuisances—those monuments of churlish imbecility and faction. I would substitute decent and comfortable edifices—I would do so, in the hope that the people, who frequent those places of worship, might be induced by the greater show of neatness and propriety to attend their parish chapel in better apparel. The inferior Irish require to be led out of the habits of rags and filth into those of a certain elevation of mind and decency of appearance; they require to be initiated in those wants, which would prove a spur to their exertions, and give a more laudable direction to their expences. I really do not know any means that could be devised so likely to communicate this inclination. When men are to repair to a hovel, or the side of a ditch, there is no inducement to put on good cloaths; but if they are to shew themselves one day in the week, in a place to which a shabby garb does not correspond, one very powerful incitement is provided to augment their means and improve their condition. This new ambition and new habit would tend, more than all the prohibitions that were ever devised, to rescue a portion of the people and of their earnings, from that cruel propensity to intoxication, a main cause of all

the crimes that are committed, and of the mischiefs and miseries we witness.* During the late years of scarcity, when distillation was prevented, and the price of spirits utterly exceeded the means of our labouring poor, a sensible amendment was observed to have taken place in the appearance and apparel of the common people.

The new division of parishes would impose a necessity of building several chapels; where the old ones are in the condition I have described, it would be equally incumbent to replace them. Hitherto this charge has been left to the wealthy Roman Catholics, and those Protestants (I must say they have been many) who saw the propriety of making this provision for the popular worship, and paying this compliment to its followers. Those who act so deserve praise, but I cannot see that the foundation of a national improvement ought to come out of the pockets of particular descriptions. It certainly is a matter of as close interest to a Protestant, as to a Roman Catholic of property, to redeem the people from dissipation and nastiness; it is a matter of nearer interest, when the people, to be so redeemed, happen to stand to the former in the relation of his neighbours, his tenantry, or dependants.

When the Roman Catholics of a parish are not able to provide themselves with a moderately neat and decent chapel, the judges of assize might have power to order the work to be done, and to direct the grand jury to assess the expence, like our other local improvements, by presentment. It would add to the merit and utility of the measure, if where there is a Protestant population, the

* I apprehend that the number of deliberate crimes committed in Ireland is far inferior to those of England, even allowing for the different proportions of population.

the chapel could be placed contiguous to the church, so that the respective congregations, at least at going to and from Divine service, might mix and be blended together.

Several of these remarks apply equally to the affair of education. There might be at the disposal of each parish priest a school-master and mistress, who under his eye, and subject to his constant visitation, should teach reading, writing, and such other instructions of the first necessity, together with the principles and duties of the christian religion, according to his own notions of them. If this were to be conducted upon private contribution, ought the charge, from its destination, to be borne exclusively by Roman Catholics?—I apprehend that it ought not; it is the affair of every man; at least it is the affair of those, who form, or aspire to be received among, the landed interest, that the people who live around them should be thrifty and well-conducted. You have, I believe, a better chance to produce good dispositions by continuing the impressions that had been first received into the mind. I certainly do not approve of taking children from one religion, to institute them in another. When they return to society, if they adhere to their newly acquired religion, they will do so at the hazard of weakening their natural affections, or at least the reverence due to their parents. Now the construction of a text of scripture, according to this or that theologian, may be right or wrong; but there can be no question that "*honour your father and mother*" is a divine precept, and the source of generous actions and commendable conduct. I would not purchase the accession of a votary to my own opinion, by teaching him to despise those, to whom he ought through life to be reverential and submissive. Probably when the parties return among

their friends, the prevalence of habit, and the recurrence of their first ideas, will draw them back to their old religion; then the attempt to reform them was labour lost, and it would have been better to have assisted in giving the same kind of virtuous education, under such circumstances, as would have never interrupted the effect of it, and where that effect would have been assisted. I see no advantage to be obtained by creating in young minds a conflict of impressions; when I look around me in the country, I can see nothing in past experience to warrant an expectation that any success will crown future efforts of this nature. I have known some instances where very estimable and well-intending persons have procured young people, by great assiduity and by premiums, to assume the appearance of being converted; but I never could find, in five years after these promoters of proselytism had removed from the particular spot, that the least trace remained of their labour. Thousands of bibles upon the reformed plan have, as I am informed, been circulated by societies in Dublin; I never could trace one of them in an Irish cabin.

I should prefer to educate the youth of the lower orders, under the direction of their peculiar pastor, who should be responsible for his care to his bishop. Where the people are Catholics, obstacles to the education of youth must eternally arise, unless the priest be the soul of the establishment—the occasions of altercation will, perhaps, frequently be frivolous, but the consequence may prove in the last degree important. I have already marked the effect of half-understanding and half-practising the injunctions of the Roman Catholic religion; but can these injunctions be ever enforced or explained, or can a respect for them

be

be created, by persons who do not comprehend the matter themselves, and who, for their own use, both reprobate and disclaim it? Many benevolent attempts to assist the poor, in the way of education, have been frustrated, sometimes by this mistaken spirit of proselytism; not unfrequently where such design was little, if at all, in contemplation, by a want of confidence in the promoters of the institution, or a want of good understanding between them and the clergymen of the popular religion. The Catholic clergyman must be expected to resist any attempt to withdraw from him the flock of which he has taken charge. It would be a breach of duty in him to hesitate or temporise; the man who did not resist every movement of this kind, would admit himself to be a cheat and an impostor. What men ought to do, you must suppose they will do. Very great exertions are making at present for the instruction of the inferior classes; but the benevolent cannot possibly succeed, unless they adopt this rule of accommodating the prepossession of the persons whom they are to act upon. I consider it not at all extraordinary, that, on a subject of this nature, the common people should attend more cheerfully and confidently to those of their own persuasion. The Catholics of property are in a situation to render the most essential services to their country by attention to these objects; and it must be noticed with congratulation, that the occasion is not neglected; every person intimately conversant with this metropolis, must feel the infinite good derived from the schools that have arisen in Dublin with the modern growth of opulence, and in which are taught the principles of a religion already familiar and acceptable to the pupils.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

The probable Amount and most effectual Method of Expenditure.

So long as the state shall deem it expedient to decline the service, aud restrict the civil ambition, of the Roman Catholic laity; above all, so long as certain corporate bodies and individuals feel themselves able, and are inclined, to make an exasperating display of dislike, suspicion, and superiority; so long it must in the course of things be expected, that considerable irritation will prevail in Ireland, and that every measure proceeding from government shall be regarded with a certain jealousy. I do not presume, at this moment, to penetrate into the reasons of state which seem to prefer apparent trifles to the most substantial advantage; which, overlooking the means of bringing a people into action, rest upon the worst and most objectionable passions of a party. I do not urge these things, nor should I touch upon them, were it not, earnestly and for its own sake, to call the property of Ireland to revise its misapprehensions—but whilst a temper unfortunately subsists, which every man must regret who loves his country, that delicacy of interfering with the Roman Catholic clergy, which under any circumstance would be required to a certain degree, becomes eminently essential. To spare and preserve the confidence of the people, the actual current of their humours must be consulted.

Partial

Partial favours to the Roman Catholic body will, no doubt, be sullenly received, whilst the public pride is wounded by the existence of a part (although comparatively an insignificant one) of the ancient system. But thepr e sent topic of our discussion is no boon to the Roman Catholic body ; it is no question of their politics ; if it were, I should probably feel as other men on the subject of an unsatisfactory compromise ; it is the formation of a public mind, and the settlement of the country. Such objects are not to be necessarily laid aside, or even postponed, until the main concerns of the Catholics of Ireland are sufficiently explained, and understood to be favourably determined ; but if our government cannot venture to seize and turn the public sentiment with the greatest possible dexterity, it should at least avoid ostentation ; the measure must be admitted by intelligent observers to be provident and circumspect, but will not, in the actual state of feeling, be reputed kind or disinterested. No man of reflection in Ireland is to be instructed, that those who represent the authority of the state do not participate in the conduct that is offensive to the people ; the vulgar will, and do, form a different association of ideas, and from the acts and temper of persons who are intrusted with power, or who assume it, they are ready to draw inferences as to the entire complexion of government. A royal bounty, scattered at this moment indiscriminately among the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland, would, so far as my reflection and enquiries enable me to judge, utterly frustrate its intended object ; government could best accomplish the desirable purposes it must have in view, and best provide for the public welfare, by taking into its own hands the remuneration of the superior clergy, and interfering with the inferiors

but

but indirectly and remotely. Commit them to the zeal of wealthy Roman Catholics, and to the policy of liberal, opulent, and enlightened Protestants, who are interested in, and feel for, the settlement of Ireland, and the security and stability of the empire. From such persons the condescension would be acceptable and endearing; it would in truth proceed from their hands with peculiar grace and efficacy. The heads of the state may communicate an impulse to that zeal—they may illuminate and direct that policy.

I do not take upon me to determine, whether the present moment is suited to an arrangement for the superior class. Without such arrangement the plan will certainly be defective; but I should think, that the concern of the parochial clergy is more urgent, and might be ventured upon, even although circumstances do not allow of the comprehensive good, that embraces the order in its intire relations. By the superior class I mean the bishops and such principals of each diocese, as may be pointed out by local circumstances and necessities. These persons ought, I apprehend, to be brought into contact, or very nearly so, with government. You cannot extend either your bounty or your inspection to every individual; but through the medium of a few, you may infuse into the whole a certain elevation of mind and sentiment; they must for that purpose be withdrawn from the necessity of obscure and inglorious drudgery—the higher pretensions must be rewarded, else they will not be encouraged or attracted. By proposing such prizes as merit or service may expect to attain, you will connect the Roman Catholic clergy with the state; the rotation of preferment will direct the views of every aspiring and intelligent mind to that authority, by which the preferments are distributed, or

at least supported, and in them you have guides which every other man will follow, and models upon which he will be habitually taught to form his character. There are those who will, perhaps, expect from zeal and supernatural assistance every good that is attainable; but zeal in our world is certainly on the decline, and the scope of this argument is by human means to consult human objects. I cannot expect that such characters shall be formed, much less that such a turn of mind shall prevail, as the present state of man requires, if the highest rate of preferment lies beneath what the supercilious will call moderate; it would be presumption in a private person, and it would be invidious, to attempt details; such must be the province of the statesman, who will proceed with superior views, and lights, and means of correct judgment. In a matter which has obviously employed my thoughts, I may venture to present a hint:—It seems to me that an annual sum of 12,000l., distributed in superior preferments, will enable government to give great satisfaction, and to effect the objects that are desired, with full as much liberality as the case requires. The amount is not considerable in the gross, nor can it become extravagant in the distribution; but it is to be observed, that it is dealt out in annuities to single men, whose demand may be less than if they were fathers or husbands. The arrangement is also combined with very flattering advantages of situation. A Roman Catholic clergyman, residing in the principal town, or amongst the most polished society of his district, called to an eminent station among his own order, and exempted from the necessity of mercenary or degrading applications, will attract to his character a very enviable degree of deference and veneration. There are duties discharged by this body

of men, and privations, which they impose upon themselves, for which money can never be a recompence; the reverential feeling of mankind is the proper retribution; but this feeling is never so animated or so complete, as when those who tender the reward are not called upon for any meaner tribute.

The dereliction of duties is the evil to be apprehended from an easy independence; but this superior class of clergymen are held by other ties—they are placed in stations sufficiently conspicuous to be generally observed, and to feel the full weight of responsibility to the public judgment; they are further guarded by a sense of the character they are to sustain, and by the habit of those qualities, on the ground of which they may be supposed to have been promoted. There can be no great risk in separating the daily expectations of men from their daily exertions, when you can calculate with certainty upon motives which are more elevated. Under other circumstances there are, however, limits to this confidence; the policy must be different with regard to persons, who have been less proved and less tried, and are not placed so much in the way of observation and inspection. Many will certainly be found to require no further incentive than the impulse of duty and of conscience, and the number of such will be encreased by the advantage of a more sedulous education; but in laying down the scheme of an arrangement, of which man is the subject, we can proceed upon that alone which experience shews to have been the ordinary and accustomed law of human conduct.

For the parochial clergy it has been propounded to lay an assessment upon the lands, such as is generally practised for our local expences. This method appears to be very fair; the objections to it, are however strong,

and,

and, as it seems to me, decisive. The priest falls into the contrary extreme from his present condition, and is rendered too independent ; with his own flock he would be regarded as a tax-gatherer, and classed with the hearth-money-man and exciseman. The inferior Protestant land owners would clamour outrageously against this addition to their fixed taxes, and, with respect to the superior order, it will I think be found, that this mode would not prove either so cheap or so convenient, as the sacrifice I shall propose hereafter.

Another plan, yet more simple, and which was said to have been favourably considered by persons whose judgment deserves the highest deference, was to issue pensions to the Roman Catholic clergy from the public revenue ; some proposed that those annuities should be equal to the probable amount of the usual receipts, with a condition to suppress the offerings paid by the people. If it were designed to purchase out and annihilate the influence of this body, then might either of these proposals be adopted. With respect to this latter project, I do not see how it would be possible to prevent the pious zeal of some Catholics from indulging itself in liberality to the church ; and if they do not give to the most unexceptionable, they will to others, who will seek to ingratiate themselves by fomenting the very temper which you are desirous to counteract and to abolish. This precisely is the case which I have already anticipated, of public money, worse than thrown away, expended to produce consequences of the most tremendous mischief. But to the clergy themselves, this mode of payment would soon be found to be neither beneficial nor satisfactory ; I think it would be declined, not for a reason which has been foolishly circulated, that the Pope has issued orders to the Catholic priests of

Ireland, not to accept of stipends from our government; the Pope does not dip into the concerns of remote beggary; but were he so absurd as to issue this extrajudicial monition, I can very safely affirm, that it would be utterly disregarded. I think they would decline the stipend, because any sum which it is probable the government would propose, or could afford to set apart for them, would not compensate for the subtraction of their dues, and yet less for the loss of influence.

Grant that they accepted the boon, several would undoubtedly neglect their cures, put the stipends in their pockets, and with this assistance become good graziers or substantial farmers. Now, on the state of things before us, what, let me ask, would be the consequence, if only in ten years one-third or one-fourth were to sink into inactivity? The opportunity of improving the state of the public mind, and of drawing the lower orders to better and calmer habits and to some degree of settlement is lost irrecoverably; so far as the neglect extended, the people are left to shift for themselves, with colder hopes and prospects every way more unfavourable.

I can speak on this subject from some little degree of experience. Among the hints which formed the outline of the present publication, and which I privately communicated to some friends when this subject was formerly agitated, a scale of distribution to the amount of 100,000l. was attempted; my subsequent opportunities of communication have convinced me, that the parties would feel by no means satisfied with the proportion which, upon this scale, might devolve to each individual; it would not compensate for the loss of influence, for the reputation of being pensioners of the government, and for what, on the presumption that they were otherwise sufficiently provided for, would be with-held by the congregations.

Now

Now in the present state of expence and demand for money, would administration encumber itself to provide a fund of 100,000l.? And what, if the minister consented to take that step, would be the consequence?

All those persons, whom the habitual jealousy of former times, or the accidental humours of the present, have formed to regard the Romish Clergy with antipathy, would be incessant in their outcry. If potatoes became dear or crops failed; if rent were advanced, or taxes accumulated; every failure and misfortune would be exhibited to a credulous people, as proceeding totally from this payment to the clergy. I recollect a few years since, a tax laid on either salt or leather was, in a certain part of Ireland, represented and fully believed, to have been imposed solely to provide a fund for the pension of a lady of that county, whose husband had rendered himself obnoxious. There is some malevolence in this promptness to be deceived on public proceedings, but we must take it into account;—withdraw the popular support, and what becomes of the Roman Catholic clergy? They are hated, envied, or at best regarded with indifference, by the most active and prominent persons in the country. The priests would be baited and worried in every moment of ill-temper; they would become a standing jest and banter, a mark at which would be discharged the spleen of every man in the community. The clerical order of the establishment, even when it is not loved, will undoubtedly be protected, because its benefices confer wealth and power, and are occasionally objects of enjoyment and pursuit to the principal families. On behalf of a poor and pains-taking ministry, there is no counterpoise, besides the favour of the people, to the hostility of party, and the malice of irreligion. Believe me, this body is composed of men too clearsighted, and

too

too fully apprized of the ground on which they are placed, to be lightly drawn from their asylum.

In Leinster, Munster and Connaught, the priests must necessarily be small farmers; a man, bound by his situation to live in the country, cannot otherwise subsist with any degree of facility or comfort; he has not villages in which to reside, nor contiguous markets where he can resort for the supply of his necessities. Now I would propose, taking advantage of this circumstance, to annex a few acres of ground to every cure, either free from rent, or upon very moderate terms, which, under certain regulations, should pass in succession to the Roman Catholic pastor for the time being. If he possessed in himself the means of building a suitable house, arrangements might be entered into for procuring compensation from his successor; in case he did not possess these means, he ought to be assisted; and such, I trust, will be the feelings of the country, whenever a calm and dispassionate explanation shall point out the importance of the Roman Catholic priesthood, and the propriety of contributing to its accommodation, that I have no appresion of backwardness in affording that assistance.

As to the supposed hostility of the Protestants, I cannot rate it very high, when I do not regard it an obstacle to a plan, which persons of that description must voluntarily execute; the truth is, that it exists in the inferior classes of that communion, who might think themselves affected by a tax, but who would have no pretence to interfere with a benevolence that was not compulsory. What if the example were set, and that to help the priests became as much a fashion as formerly to harass them? In the present and past times, adventurers, or those who seek to turn the follies or misfortunes of the country to profit, set up religion as a pretext, and

weak

weak men follow them; persons in easy condition, when the season permitted them to direct their actions calmly, have seldom hesitated to appear liberal and considerate to the popular prepossessions.

I really do not think, that Protestants of any property or education, in the proportion of one in twenty, entertain that decided indisposition to their Catholic fellow-subjects which is frequently mentioned, and which has perhaps been considered, consulted, nay, yielded to beyond what on any view of the matter such a sentiment could merit. The feeling of that class is a sort of careless contempt for what they have never taken the pains to understand; they see before them the religion of peasants, what a superficial reader will learn to sneer at from Mr. Hume and Mr. Gibbon. So far the recommendation and inducement to undertake enquiry and research are not powerful or striking; the importance of the system has not been felt, for its details and relations have never been explained; it has remained buried under the obloquy that arose from the faults, and the contumely occasioned by the condition of its followers. These faults have never been traced to the proper cause, the entire matter has not become the subject of reflection.

Be the number more or less, a great part are drawn, by accidental matters, into this unfortunate alienation from the interest of their country; this is no natural or long acquired disposition; it results from the misrepresentations with which people are stunned; it proceeds from those pestilential libels, with which a few gentlemen of our metropolis think fit to poison society; they call themselves Anti-jacobins, whilst they are stirring up the Subject against the Throne, and recruiting adherents for Bonaparte. It will astonish the world to perceive how rapidly this puny, presuming, and mischievous faction

will

will moulder away, whenever government shall determine (as surely must at length be the case, where the public interest points so obviously) to treat it with steady discountenance.

The farms proposed, ought to run from fifteen to about twenty-five acres. I do not so much recommend them to be rent free, as the priest might be induced by the ease of that situation to let the ground, and content himself with the income; this step would involve him in the vices of the pensioning system. I count upon the activity of the individual, as a main and most valuable part of the provision; valuable, as it determines his exertions and his residence in the centre of his duties; and valuable, as it tends to make his situation more comfortable with less burden to the public. Let me suppose the priest to be charged with a rent, according to circumstances, of from one-fourth to one-half of the actual and current value; his residence on the spot, his personal attention, and his facilities for cultivation, would render the situation more convenient and more desirable, than if he were to receive a direct annuity of from sixty to eighty pounds; and yet the entire object may be very well accomplished at an annual expence of ten pounds per parish; in the project there is this additional advantage to the Roman Catholic clergy, that the proceeding is so conformable to the practice of the country, as to appear in no respect extraordinary. The confidence of the people would not be interrupted, because the hand of superior authority would not be visible—so far indeed as the matter might appear to be a spontaneous kindness, issuing from the gentry of the country, the effect must be conciliatory.

I would at the same time leave unmolested, the occasional dues of the parish priest; even the annual offer-

ings

ings I would allow him to collect, trusting to the pride arising from independence, that he will abstain from that craving and cringing solicitation, which deforms at present the aspect of that ministry. It cannot be alleged, that the people are incommoded by the trifle which the priests receive from them; the payment falls mostly on the farmer, who is very competent to bear it.

There is a good deal of jealous and punctilious vanity in the character of the Irish; they are flattered, and consider the clergyman their own, when the option is left to them of a voluntary retribution for his service; at least the contrary extreme would be resented, and would sever the pastor too widely from his congregation. It cannot be frequently enough repeated, that religion, and every feeling and sentiment connected with it, require at the time, and in the country before us, to be touched with an exquisitely delicate hand, and watched and cherished with a fostering attention. I do not object to a contribution, which attaches the parties to each other, whilst I consider it injurious to the public, that this should constitute the sole dependance of the receiver.

Such farms as I have described, adapted to the conditions and necessities of the country parish priests, would be obtained in great number and for very trifling consideration: some cases might exact a small abatement of the improved value; it would suffice in other instances, that the proprietor of the soil should demise, at the actual rate, ground, either partially reclaimed, or which had been neglected; the tenure here would be the sole expence to the one party, and encouragement to the other. The country priests are usually the sons of farmers, early formed to the management of land, and among the very best practical agriculturists in the kingdom. The leases ought to be taken in the name of trustees, for a long term

of years, suppose from sixty to ninety-one years; a reversion would remain in the family of the grantor, and the church would be prevented from becoming unnecessarily opulent in the event of such changes, as a rise in land, or depreciation of money. Upon that tenure a house might be built, and lasting improvements entered into; the clergyman would have ample profit in the progressive rise on the land, when subjected to careful and assiduous cultivation; the landlord would have a good tenant, a valuable improvement on his estate, and the permanent advantage to his tenantry, that a striking and impressive example of correct demeanour is brought home to their own rank, and familiarized with their daily observation. There are very few landlords, whom a sense of the propriety of the measure, a desire to be favourably considered by their tenants, and a wish to consult or compliment the inclination of that body, would not lead to a greater sacrifice than an inconsiderable abatement; in fact, landlords, generally absentees, have in an immense number of instances, already manifested a wish to anticipate this project. Farms have been often given to the parish priest, which were designed as a provision for his situation, but the leases having been made to the individual, and not to trustees, the successor was ousted by the representatives of the deceased incumbent; to avoid this mistake, a still greater number have given a few acres of land on tenancies at will; lands in the greater part of Ireland, in order to be brought to profit, require a more operose and extensive cultivation than any man will undertake on this tenure.

The state of society varies so much in different parts of our island, that it is next to impossible to form a general regulation of uniform applicability. In the northern district, the Roman Catholics are the poorest of the

the people, and the connexion with the clergy is a charge which they support with difficulty. In the sourth, this connexion is a bond of endearing interest, which it would prove injurious to violate; the former instance is an exception to the universal maxims we have laid down, and a peculiar case, to which what I have offered, and shall mention as national regulations, could not possibly be extended; here a royal bounty might with propriety be bestowed; the people know little of the politics that agitate the upper ranks, or that prevail in the great towns and opulent districts; by them the favour would be received as a kind solicitude, a provident and charitable condescension.

Again, in the northern district, population is so very thick, that these allotments are not to be procured, for every spot of ground is appropriated; towns or villages abound, and markets are convenient. Whatever accommodations the country or the situation of the individual affords, are to be obtained for money; a direct payment might in that district be therefore accepted; another popular religion prevails in the northern counties, and the emulation between the two sects would counteract that inclination to remissness, which is otherwise to be apprehended in the case of a fixed and unimproving stipend.

The case is different where there is no such rivalship, where land is not so minutely divided, where it is easily to be had, and where the priest must, on any terms, have some dealing of that nature. Another circumstance serves further to recommend this mode of assisting the Roman Catholic ministry:—Every parish priest, on his appointment to a country cure, has to seek out a residence; the farm of the predecessor, if it were of any value, having passed to his relatives. In order to procure this accommodation, together with that little farm, with-

out which he cannot provide the articles * of indispensable consumption, he is constrained to enter into competition, and outbid some of his parishioners. Now this precisely is the offence most heinous in the eyes of the lower Irish, and most revolting to their feelings; no incident can be more exactly calculated to divide the parish into factions, and to diminish the future credit of the clergyman: it must be a very great improvement in the condition of the individual, if on being named to his cure, he were immediately to find his most essential want supplied, and to enter into possession of his most material accommodation.

When the details of this arrangement come under investigation, I am of opinion that a public good so immense will be found practicable, and that it really may be accomplished, under a rational management, almost without any expence whatsoever. Present the object to the public; let zealous Catholics be satisfied that the trust they repose will be faithfully discharged; convince public spirited and politic men of every description, how momentous is the utility of the undertaking, and it will execute itself. Make it evident to the great landed proprietors (and surely the task is not difficult) that the true education which Ireland requires, and which has so often been attempted in vain by other means, is to uphold the Roman Catholic church, to reconcile its followers, to new model its clergy, or at least to ensure in them a cast and bias favourable to the present civil system; let them be convinced, that from

* The priest must keep a horse, he must have his own hay, corn, garden produce, &c. &c. It appears to me, that twenty acres of land, under thrifty management, will supply the frugal wants of a small family.

from this enterprize, and this alone, they can expect that regeneration, that correction of the popular mind and manners, which is essential to the improvement, nay to the security of their property; guided by their own interest, where a more noble motive shall fail, it is impossible, but that they must be brought to a general and effectual co-operation.

The advantages of this arrangement to the parish priests would be, first a certainty, fixed and secure against all contingencies; next, they would be at no charge for their chapel, and they would be saved the assessment which they at present pay to their respective bishops, that is, if the crown took into its own hands this member of the establishment.

I do not think that the details of this institution ought to be managed by the government or by its officers. Government ought not to be more than a party assisting and co-operating. The proper method appears to me, to institute for the purpose a voluntary association; I am even inclined, perhaps I go too far, that the members of it should not be exclusively Roman Catholics, but they undoubtedly ought to be men strongly impressed with the duty of preserving the state, and with a sense of the importance of the Roman Catholic religion, of the respect which is due to it, and of the decorum with which it ought to be conducted. There are many societies in Ireland for public purposes, any of which may serve as a model; that which I propose ought to consist of many members, lest a few might obtain a dangerous influence, and they ought not to be selected from any particular district, as those places which were overlooked, might lessen their interest in, and become cold to, the institution.

The government might be a liberal subscriber to such an establishment, and patronize, though it did not conduct

duct, it. The business of the society should be to collect and receive donations, to facilitate the patriotic intentions of those who were willing to make leases gratuitously, to treat with others who should require consideration, to assign stipends in money where farms are not to be procured, or where other circumstances militate against that arrangement. In those parts where the lands have been brought to a high state of improvement, the ingenuity of the receiver could not augment the profitable produce to the extent that might be necessary, and it were too much to expect a considerable abatement in the rent without compensation. It might afford another object of concern to this society, to provide proper accommodation for divine worship, in case this object was not to be attained by the means which I have already indicated.

The great towns must be of course excluded from a mode of provision, which is applicable only to rural economy. But in these places it is as much as elsewhere, incumbent to introduce certainty, and to obviate dependance! The means of attaining these objects, still avoiding to clash with the influence and consideration that are necessary to be preserved, must be a matter of special deliberation. The annuities, which I recommended to assign to the clergymen, next in degree to bishops, would fall very much to the lot of the parish priests in the principal towns and cities. It would indeed be prudent, and aid the general plan, to give this direction to the royal bounty.

Another claim upon the public, of a very direct nature, which has continued to the present day to be strangely, indeed I think reprehensibly, neglected, might here be turned to advantage: I mean the duties discharged by Roman Catholic clergymen, in jails, hospitals, and such public institutions, and the attendance on the military,

tary, since they have been indulged with the exercise of this religion. The instances are extremely rare of any recompence for these painful and dangerous services. The Protestant clergymen have stipends assigned upon such establishments;—their attendance however, is necessarily confined to a smaller number, for the poor, as we already have observed, are seldom Protestants; and even when the assistance is required, the manner of administering it imposes much less of irksome duty. The circumstance of confession alone makes an infinite difference; the clergyman must sit for a length of time beside the sick bed, in a contagious atmosphere; he must inhale from the mouth of the infected person, a breath tainted with disease, and rendered more noxious by being conveyed in close whispers. Several comforts ought to be supplied, even as the means of palliating illness and preventing infection. The duty of Catholic Ordinary of Newgate has hitherto been discharged without reward; and some time back, when a distemper raged in that prison, the officiating clergyman contracted the fever, and perished. There is in every county in Ireland, and in all the large towns, a prison, at least one infirmary, and a barrack. Salaries are justly due for attendance on these places. It would be well to encourage and reward the promptitude to discharge such duties, although sickness might not require the actual service. The salaries to be allotted might go in aid of the assistants, who in large towns are particularly indispensable. I do not apprehend that these appointments would be expected to run higher than from twenty to thirty pounds a year; and only one department, the care of the military, would be a burden to be defrayed by government. Whether the project adopted were that of pensions from the state, of land, or the mixture of both, I would make it go hand in hand with

the

the reduction of parishes; the one measure might afford a compensation to those who should suffer by the other, and serve to facilitate their compliance.

My diffused remarks have very much anticipated the consequences of this institution; some are of such magnitude—they are so requisite to compose the public mind of Ireland, to establish a fair and proper correspondence between the feelings of the people and that order of things and those authorities which it is their fortune to obey, and at once their duty and their interest to cherish, that I must again slightly touch and review these topics. They know little of human nature who imagine, that in any age the church possessed unlimited power over its followers—they know very little of Ireland, who calculate, that such is the temper that actually reigns amongst us; the indirect influence of ecclesiastical institutions has at all times been very great, and is more or less considerable, in proportion as the subjects to whom it is applied are more or less enlightened. The clergy, and the practices they sanction, do certainly act upon mankind as the first and most powerful instrument. If civilization is to be produced, if manners are to be amended, hither you must resort, not perhaps with the certainty of success, but surely with a probability greater than breaks upon you from any other quarter. It is just the same as in private life, when you desire to fashion the individual, and to draw him nearer to the perfection of correct demeanor, you attend to the intercourse which he principally appears to value.

The error of our internal economy in Ireland is, that we expect the effect of magic from the clerical function, at a moment, when of all others, it must be impotent and inoperative; when the people are led by their folly, their feelings, or the villainy of imposition, to be

guilty

guilty of acts of outrage, then we look to that character, which in peaceable times we had derided—these things are all in an inverted order; the priest might go very far to preserve good temper, and to guard against the first approaches of delusion or discontent, if he were in time held up to respect and supported; but there is an end of his means and of his usefulness, so soon as the emergency arises. Popular tumult is the ascendant of the most furious spirits, the decline of influence and depression of the peaceable; it denotes that the power of the latter over the multitude is totally subdued, and that of the former, by some means or other, predominant. This state of things may be averted by rational precaution or preaching that will recal the sway of reason, or calm the agitated surface of society.

I do not mean to apply myself to the ordinary faults of ignorance and a low condition; among the poor many will envy the rich, and many will be inclined to violate the sanctuary of opulence—the ordinary laws of every country are sufficiently strong to coerce these dispositions; I am not a projector so wild, as that I should expect to banish them from Ireland; what presses upon my mind, are the great political deformities of our national character, the jealousy entertained of government, the promptitude to revolt, the ear that is open to every delusive tale, the eye that is turned to every enemy, and all these things occurring in a rank, and among a description which is perfectly out of the reach of these disabilties, in which our laws incomprehensibly persist; amongst men, upon whom those disabilities impose no privation, and who cannot be supposed to, and in fact who do not, essentially sympathize with the parties affected. I do not concur with those, who consider the Irish peasant to be eminently destitute; I rather incline to think, that his means are not deficient, but

owing to a depression, and slovenly turn, of mind, he either does not apply these means, or does not call forth his resources. I shall not dissemble that the causes of this condition are sufficiently present to my mind; but this is a new and extensive argument, in which I shall not venture to engage at the close of another equally arduous investigation; it must at any time be reluctantly taken up—it mixes too much with the language of reproach:—it affects men, whom to blame is painful and ungracious; men, estimable generally; who have been misled by the condition and circumstances in which they were placed: who have erred, because they neglected to examine and to weigh what few of us look into, the relations by which we are surrounded—but harshness of discipline and outragedp r ejudices never can be out of view, when we contemplate the state and internal economy of Ireland; to account for the disaffection and disquietude of a country thus situated, there is no need to suppose or resort to any process of reasoning; if a populace ever does reason, or if they did so in the instance before us, we cannot be surprized that, however innocent the heads of the state, government in general should be confounded with those, who pretended to espouse its cause, and boasted that they wielded its means and displayed its energies, or that a determined hostility to the one should produce and preserve alienation from the other. These thoughts do not refer exclusively to the times that come near our own; the retrospect extends to at least one hundred years, during which period the wounds of Ireland have never been permitted to close. Was all, then, error at one side and good conduct on the other? Assuredly it was not; so much mismanagement could never have taken place without producing reciprocal faults and follies; but the agressor, in every quarrel, must have the larger share

of blame, and he, whose forbearance could compose the strife, is culpable for its continuance.

Two great revolutions in legislation have taken place within a few years, the repeal of the popery laws, so far as it has gone, (and certainly it includes very much the gross population of the country) and the Union: These measures, the first by diffusing property and political rights among the lower classes; the second by reducing the power and encreasing the responsibility of the gentry, are calculated to draw the inferior people from their grovelling debasement; the process of this improvement must necessarily have been slow, but it has sustained infinite check and delay by the Rebellion, or rather by the colouring which a few writers have given to an event, of which the contrivers can never be sufficiently execrated, or the followers too much pitied.—Now, more than ever, great assistance is demanded; much is to be borne up, and much to be counteracted. The temper is first to be removed which these atrocious incendiaries created, and which some people are perhaps fond to cling to, as a plank in a ship-wreck, feeling that by the Union the ground on which they stood is very much altered, and that they are likely to sustain a considerable diminution of consequence, to be in fact reduced to the level of their natural pretensions. This state of things cannot be of long continuance; it is the ultimate struggle of declining consequence, which we are to expect to be not other than pertinacious. I can very clearly discern the formation of a mind more vigorous and firm amongst men, who heretofore scarcely presumed to raise their heads. I have seen several instances of legal resistance to overbearing conduct, of arrogance checked, and of severity called to account, which the parties would not have dared to venture upon, whilst the offenders acted under the shelter of our

former constitution, and of the manners which it sanctioned. I do not despair of seeing the *peasant* of the south of Ireland assert his personal and civil rights *unprotected*, against a *gentleman*, in a regular course of justice*. When we

* The following anecdote, taken at random, will serve to exemplify the practice of those parts of Ireland, where the manners and relations of life have been vitiated by either the direct or indirect consequences of the popery system. Some time back, a turbulent disposition manifested itself in part of Munster; a country gentleman, a humane, popular, and intelligent man, was desirous, if possible, to preserve the common people of his neighbourhood from being involved in the mischief. He went on Sunday to the parish chapel, as the most convenient place in which he could meet a number of people, and the best adapted to warn and exhort them. After service, he drew a good part of the congregation together, and spoke to them collectively and individually with considerable effect and impression. Whilst he was actually proceeding, as a magistrate, to administer the oath of allegiance, he observed a bustle at the distant part of the croud, and a confused murmur reached him that Mr.———was pressing their horses; the fact actually was that a neighbouring magistrate, who had to transmit prisoners to the county jail, being at a loss to mount some of his party, calmly bethought himself of taking those on which the country people brought their families to Mass, without ever calculating how the feelings of the people would be affected, or making the least account of the illegality of the proceeding. My friend pacified the tumult by ordering from his own stable the number of horses that were requisite; if he had not fortunately been at hand to interfere, an affray would probably have ensued; the country people never would have dreamed of letting the horses go, and seeking reparation by a civil action, they would have defended their property with their clubs, the magistrate and his party would probably have been put to flight, and his prisoners liberated; he would have directly ran to Dublin to expose his zeal and his sufferings; the provocation would have been studiously concealed both from government and the public, and the facts given with all the ostentation of a wanton and unprovoked rebellion. It is thus Sir Richard Musgrave and our other marvellous story-tellers have swelled their legendary narratives, and given a most inaccurate representation of the state and temper of Ireland, by detailing incidents with the omission of the circumstances that led to them. There is not the least doubt that the resistance to which the people were disposed, and which was thus happily prevented, would have been an intemperate act, and by no means so prudent as the other sober and regular proceeding; but who that

irritates

we shall arrive at this point of confidence in the law, and familiarity with its dispensations, then will I defy the enemies of the British Crown, and call Ireland impregnable.

I know not whom these sentiments on the Union will please, though I am perfectly aware of the many to whom they are like to prove unacceptable; that great measure has

irritates a mob is to expect prudence and temperance? I apprehend that violence might with reason have been calculated upon, from almost any men in the like circumstances.

I have related this transaction in order to place a picture of the real state of things, not only before persons in England, but before others near home, who are misled as essentially and as grossly—the Protestants, solely conversant with large cities or with the non-Catholic parts of the north of Ireland. It is eternally pressed upon them, and with such assiduity as to have gained the belief of many, that the unquiet state of certain parts of Ireland arises from fanaticism, and is fomented by religious zeal and feelings, all which exist only in the minds of those who make the assertion. What belongs to exasperation is ascribed to the agency of opinions, and the artifice and ambition of ecclesiastics. With respect to the fact I have quoted, undeniably few would be found to imitate the violence intended by Mr. ————, but none would have combined or exerted themselves to punish it.

To record circumstances of this nature would be a waste of time, and perhaps in some respects censurable, if it were a sudden heat or transitory violence; but if these be settled habits of acting, and if similar incidents occur so often as to keep alive an irritation of the popular mind, the matter deserves to be explored; still more if principles of government erroneous, and maxims eternally false, are intended to be built upon the consequences deduced from such proceedings. It is idle to talk of the settlement of Ireland without a complete and radical correction of our provincial or parochial system. With the aid of this correction, I would venture to promise much for the civil improvement of the country. I may presume upon better means and closer observation than the British ladies and gentlemen, who forward Irish intelligence to India. There is no want of cordiality with respect to the crown and sister nation—our materials for subordination and good government are admirable. If the Irish were judiciously brought to a good understanding with their immediate superiors, they would be found, in point of steady attachment, to be equalled by few members of the empire, and not by any to be surpassed in energy.

has been left to struggle with the difficulties of infancy, not deserted alone by its parents, but even, as if they hesitated to recollect their concern in it. In the view, which I am accustomed to take of the Union of the British legislatures, it would seem capable of being rendered the proudest monument to the reputation of its promoters; but satisfied with the achievement, they appear not unwilling to consign to oblivion the expediency and policy of the proceeding; and, at least with regard to Ireland, are content it should pass as an evil to be acquiesced in from necessity. I cannot concur in this fashion; inconsiderable my testimony certainly is, but I shall not with-hold it from the merits of that act, which, extinguishing our domestic parliament, gave us a form of government more conformable to the feelings, the passions, the interests, and the state of property that exists in Ireland.

It would be difficult to compress in a few pages, the objections to our former constitution that easily present themselves. We are a nation of parties; the popery laws and the convulsions that preceded them, vested the influence arising from land, in the hands principally of one party; our political institutions conferred upon the same persons, in this capacity of the landed interest, an almost unbounded authority; but if such at all times was a vicious and reprehensible distribution, a change of circumstances at length rendered it utterly incompatible with the peace and settlement of the country. That description of the Irish, who, in this objectionable state of things, had been inferior, increased by the operation of the corn laws, both in number and opulence; the breach made in the popery system bestowed upon their acquisitions the advantages of security and permanence; the aggregate produced a state of mind, not perhaps more impatient

patient than formerly, of the harsh control which was exercised, but infinitely more prone to counteract and to resist it. There was no dominion of opinion; the submission was merely to power in possession; the persons who claimed obedience had for the most part attained their eminence within recent memory, and at least in the minds of the subject body there was a very full disposition to assert equality. As riches accrued to the latter, the points of distinction still disappeared; it must always be held in view, that the wealthy and intelligent part of the Roman Catholics, before the relaxation of the popery laws, were in the constant habit of emigration; the mass that remained at home would consequently be induced to submit with greater ease to any condition imposed upon them; when this circumstance was altered, a change in the letter of the law could not suffice to adapt the country to its novel order and relations; it was requisite to ascend higher, to seek the springs and sources of passions and of conduct; by these the character of men is formed, and here the impression was to be made when an alteration of character was called for; in a double sense this alteration was required; from the one class, who were elevated above the condition of equal subjects, and from the other, who had been infinitely depressed below that level; it by no means follows that one country will flourish under an exact transcript of the institutions that are applicable to another. The parliamentary constitution of England is the control of its great proprietors, but that description had in general abandoned Ireland, and our domestic parliament became a government of the second class of property; conscious that its title to, or tenure of, lead and following, were not of the best or most secure description, this body, perhaps with a view to turn from itself the speculations of the public,

were

were not averse to cherish what has been called religious animosities. It undoubtedly is true, that some of the first men in the land took an active concern in the politics of Ireland, but they were few—they were not checked by the diversity of views, and they rather adopted the character of the other order then communicated their own. I think the Union has improved as much the condition of these respective classes as that of the country; it has converted an envied and precarious influence into steady property, and exchanged that which repelled them from, for that which unites them with, the people. There is room for congratulation in the change, even to the parties themselves; it will prove in time equally grateful to the order of private gentlemen, that, removed from the temptation and inducement to act a part, which I decline to name, they are placed in a situation to live henceforward with their tenants and dependants in the estimable and endearing character of friends and benefactors.

There are many points of view in which the reign of George III. as it relates to Ireland, appears to resemble what was most salutary and laudable in the English government of Henry VII. I would place this affair of the Union in parallel with the abolition of entails; as the benefit of the latter has been, so probably will be that of the former, more for posterity than for the age in which it was transacted. That the result should not be altogether instantaneous, is no matter of astonishment, and we must lament that it is not so rapid as we had reason to conjecture. The Union was certainly a measure of great sacrifices; our portion is to encounter the regrets and bitternesses which it has occasioned. To the second class of property, in many places the most eminent, and in all the most active of our residents,

dents, the domestic parliament afforded very great advantages; these have been curtailed, and some stings of resentment are natural, which will be the stronger as the privation is more immediately felt, and will be more openly avowed, in proportion as the great measure in question seems to be unpatronized and unprotected. If individuals could have been assisted without public detriment, I should regret a change injurious to a valuable order, and to respectable members of society; —I should regret that new impediments have risen to check the career of aspiring merit. These are personal feelings; many such have been engaged against the Union; many are the subordinate views and projects to which it has proved fatal; opposed to these is the cold and remote consideration of national advantage; the murmurs of the persons, who have sustained the inconvenience, are loud and near, whilst the public good proceeds slowly and unobserved; and those, to whom the benefit will accrue, are frequently not in a condition to perceive the improvement of their situation, never likely to assert or to proclaim it.

A seat in parliament, under our former constitution, was of more importance than at present, as it gave the possessor a more immediate and more beneficial sway over the measures of government; the number of competitors was greater, it included every man of weight in the respective counties; the resident landed interest, who could determine these competitions, were of course to be reciprocally supported; to the lot of this body also devolved a great share of the returns for boroughs. I think it not extravagant to compute, that one hundred persons, composing almost the whole acting aristocracy of Ireland, the prime residents, whose situation enabled them directly to dictate to the supreme authority, were in

this manner altogether influenced by the feelings and views of this interest; and that the same class furnished to the representative body one hundred and fifty persons, who, although not qualified to impose terms on the government, were immediately in the way of influencing it by their representations. This system formed a compact and irresistible combination of the wealthy against their inferiors, deriving a more acrimonious and overbearing character, from the temper and turn of thought, which, having originated in the popery code, had subsisted too long, and become too inveterate to be supplanted without difficulty. I shall be excused this digression; it is within the scope of my general design to unfold the means of improving the condition and elevating the spirit of the lower Irish; and the prospect, which the Union opens to us in this respect, appears to me, beyond all calculation, promising. We have heard a great deal of what might be done by a domestic parliament in suppressing insurrections, but experience applies exactly the other way. In my judgment, if Lord Camden had not been encumbered by a domestic parliament, the conspiracy of 1798 would have been confined to the few caballers in Dublin, with whom it originated, and never would have reached the vitals of the country; and equally do I think, that if Lord Hardwicke had acted under this influence, the frantic fanaticism of an insane young man, which scarcely extended three miles beyond Dublin, and which might have been produced in almost any large town by intoxication and bribery, would have been extended into a national rebellion.

SECTION.

SECTION V.

Objections — Character of the Roman Catholic Religion, and Conduct of the Clergy in the recent Troubles of Ireland.

RETURNING to the matter of my original proposition, I shall finally survey the good that is to be achieved, the means that are to be exerted, and the prominent objections to my project; the latter are, the supposed repugnance of the Roman Catholic system to our state, in fact an allegation that it is utterly irreconcileable with a Protestant government; and a very puerile apprehension lest the Romish clergy might in some instances be better provided than certain of the establishment; as these profess the same religion, they are represented to have claims of closer kindness on the dispensers of the public revenue. Such matters might be fairly and reasonably urged, if a mere act of generosity were proposed, and that an option lay among subjects, from whom no return was required, or who were otherwise in point of usefulness indifferent. No person can object, that gentlemen should be grateful for the consolations of religion, and bountiful, to the utmost extent, to the clergymen by whom these are administered. To compare either the duties of different orders, or their respective emoluments, is an invidious task: Those who think the funds of the establishment insufficient may enlarge them with their proper bounty;

they may edify mankind; they may reward and embellish great deserts and great capability. These considerations do not interfere with the provision for another class of men, who have other duties to perform, whose necessities are admitted, and whose functions (I regard the matter totally under a political aspect) seem to be indispensable. The parliamentary allowance to a curate of the established church in Ireland is, I believe, seventy-five pounds per annum, and he has frequently to provide for a family—true; but in the first place, the number of curates is small, and the necessity for them not common; in the next, the instances are very rare in Ireland of a clergyman of the established church being continued long upon a curate's stipend; in general his sole duty is to read prayers on Sunday; whereas the Catholic priest is obliged to a constant and laborious attendance on the poor and sick. A Protestant curacy is, moreover, the first step of a young man who just passes from college; but in the other case, the appointment is a promotion upon which the possessor is to rest for a length of time, and which he cannot hope to improve very rapidly, or very materially. As the establishment in Ireland is constituted, no man ever took orders on the prospect of remaining for life on a curacy; those, who do so remain, are men who have failed in their expectations: There surely is no reason in setting up as a measure for the utmost promotion of one description of men, that which is the lowest emolument of the neglected and disappointed in another order. The assistant priests, of whom I have spoken, correspond with the curates of the establishment. If the inferior denomination of the Protestant clergy is provided for to the same extent, as the well-beneficed of the Catholic; and if those in the latter church, who correspond with this lowest denomination of the former, perform their duty

for

for a mere maintenance, there is certainly no room to suppose, that the preference to the establishment does not still remain in full vigour.

Now, in estimating our means of correcting evil dispositions and promoting good ones, what must be the advantage, if, on every extent of five or six miles, a well-educated person and of cool judgment can be placed, to serve as a link or point of contact between, what are as yet unmeasurably separated, the upper and lower orders; his situation ensuring him familiar access to the poor, his conduct, and a sense of his value entitling him to the notice and protection of the affluent? Such will be the popular pastor, when he shall be enabled to give a liberal scope to his understanding, and when opulent society shall cease to refuse him admittance, or disclaim him; he will thus connect the two great divisions of mankind, in a manner certainly beneficial to both, but which applies most immediataly to those urgent necessities of the superior one, its repose and its security. I do not know whether the clergyman is more likely to sink by the low estimation in which his people are held, or these to be degraded and debased by the contumelious treatment of their pastors; certainly, he who is intent on rescuing mankind from a mean and abject condition, should apply himself in the first instance to expand the views and cultivate the minds of the ecclesiastics, who instruct and guide and are attended to by the objects to be corrected —he should next endeavour to employ this body in acting upon their followers, and communicating to them the impulse and improvement he designed to accomplish. Surely polished life cannot hesitate for an instant to adopt, at least in a certain degree, our popular clergy, and by so doing, to elevate their feelings, and to diffuse amongst them the impressions of a liberal and ingenuous mind. So

intimate

intimate is the relation of this body with the general population, so strongly is the influence felt of its conversation and example, that a corresponding effect may with confidence, be expected to take place through the entire range of society. Amply, indeed, will the favour of the wealthy be repaid, if the objects of it be able to conciliate to them the kindness, and to soften, in regard to them and to the state, the feelings and sentiments of the multitude.

Anti-social tenets have at times been broached by Roman Catholic divines, and I believe by divines of every other religious communion; the simple credulity of mankind has at times been gratified and tampered with by foolish conceits, by pretended sanctities, by the illusions of superstition and extravagancies of fanaticism. There must indeed be not a little of spiritual and sectarian pride, and no small ignorance of human nature and history in those, who limit such weaknesses to any particular society. Without adverting, or caring whether the admission be critically correct, I will suppose the greater number to be ascribable to countries and ages, in which the Roman Catholic religion was prevalent—it may be so. This religion has lived longer with mankind, has mixed with a greater variety of nations, ages, and characters; to vindicate the church of England or that of Scotland from such infirmity is merely to assert the fact of Britain in the most luminous period of her history; to claim an exemption for the Lutheran church is in like manner the purgation of certain restricted territories, in, and adjacent to, Germany; so of all the rest; it is easy to be vain, if you are to oppose the wisdom of a spot, and the most select examples, against the foibles of the universe. The history of the vulgar in Roman Catholic countries, perhaps most of all in our own, has been more copiously

descanted

descanted upon than the like classes of the reformed ; it was subjected to the vigilant and scrutinizing inquisition of Deism in other countries, of party spirit with us. I have no doubt that deviations from rational religion and enlightened piety are equally to be found among all nations, varying not with tenets, which the people do not and cannot understand, but with the care and attention that is bestowed on matters familiar and intelligible to them. The mind of an Englishman is certainly not more alert in other respects ; he is probably in this matter not farther removed from simplicity. The statesman would have before him indeed a long and dreary prospect, if he decline to settle the mind of his country, until he shall succeed in banishing the popular apprehension of hobgoblins.

I very probably proceed beyond my means, and am likely to acquit myself with even more than my accustomed feebleness, when I approach the confines of theology ; it is matter with which I am far from conversant ; but plain reason may guide a man who pretends to no more, as to what we actually meet in the world, and the consequences of it upon human feelings. I endeavour, perhaps weakly and circuitously, to attain this point, that if any of the christian systems, especially the Roman Catholic, with which I am best acquainted, seemed to have been betrayed into tendencies unfavourable to our civil institutions, the fact (even should it be admitted), implies no more than a neglect of means, an injudicious choice of instruments, and an over-sight of character. You may chuse, suppose in the church of England, between bishop Warburton and an itinerant field-preacher ; in the church of Rome, between the superior intelligence of Bossuet, Fenelon, and Pascal, and a wandering monk in the moun-

mountains of Abyssinia ; there are gradations and shades of distinction, of which these are the extremes. Will any man suppose that the Doctors of Sorbonne taught all the idle legends, and the confidences in this or that garb, or such matters as have at times been offered for adoption, when men were found so weak or ignorant as to receive them ? I need not observe, that practices and observances connected with religion, will vary essentially, when sensible and intelligent men lead the way, from what branches out of the same stock, under the management of the ignorant and sordid ; you cannot convert into a Bossuet or an enlightened Sorbonist, every man whose province it is to teach religion ; but surely you may present these approved models for imitation—you may direct men to draw their knowledge from the same fountains, to form their minds upon the same system ; you will obtain something very excellent, when you fall short of perfect resemblance. Now mark exactly the conduct you pursued :—you talked yourselves into a fever about popish bigotry—by way of preventing it, you would not allow ecclesiastics to be instituted near home, so you calmly drove the people to seek their pastors where ignorance and bigotry are confessedly at the highest. In the excess of apprehension relative to the Pope's supremacy, you gave him not, as in other countries, the titular recognition, but the actual nomination of an entire hierarchy ; this was not enough, the principal members of it, until his revenues failed, were rendered pensioners on his bounty. These were the provisions of Protestant ascendancy—this the precaution it chose for its security.

Those who are only intent on turning every thing to crimination will, I suppose, here fasten on a sentence of a pastoral letter, which they have already twisted

and

and hammered out into a thousand different consequences: that "the Roman Catholic religion is every where the same." So it is, but this designation applies to matters of doctrine, which have no effect on civil or social life, and I at present consider religion as it appertains to these relations. No man was ever better or worse, as a husband, a father, a citizen, or a subject, whether he reject or believe the real presence in the eucharist; but he will probably be more correct, according to the quarter from which proceed the impulse his mind receives, and the precepts that direct his conduct. Whatever the church had decided and ascertained as tenets of religion, were taught in France before the revolution, and inviolably adhered to; but as firmly did the Gallican church reject many opinions that had been broached by particular divines, and favourably received in other parts of the continent. Of these were the superiority of the ecclesiastical over the civil authority, the high independence of the former, and the long train of exemptions which were claimed for spiritual persons. No man in France thought of these things, not the most zealous or the most orthodox. No man thought of a thousand frivolous superstitions, which are practised even in the dominions of Spain and Portugal. Now as you cannot refuse to have the Catholic religion in Ireland, why should you not endeavour to fashion it according to this approved model of the Gallican church, the most enlightened and liberal without any question that ever existed, which on all hands has been admitted to have been orthodox and pure, and which proved itself perfectly stedfast?

Upon no subject, as it appears to me, are there misconceptions more gross and dangerous, than on this of

the genius of the Roman Catholic religion. Led by its prejudices to imagine an incompatibility that did not exist, and to magnify faults that might have been remedied, the country abandoned, as an hopeless pursuit, the direction of this system, and then fell precisely into the predicament which it shunned, and produced the ills it seemed to deprecate. You were so dainty and abhorrent of popery that you would not touch or approach is; but it was the natural growth of the land, and shot up wild on every side; you descanted on its fancied defects, until you filled up a catalogue of real ones infinitely more formidable. How many persons do we every day meet, genuine lovers of their country, meaning only what is honorable and correct, the very men who constitute a great portion of that active, deliberating, and intelligent class, in whom the public mind may be said to reside, who are ready, even at this hour, to proceed upon the same false lights and narrow conceptions? Popery with them is somewhat, which where it is passive, degrades the character of man; where it is active, or energetic, renders him virulent and ferocious. The first error is to institute a standard of comparison utterly inapt and incompetent; you bring into parallel the middle and superior ranks of one description, who have all the advantages and lights of cultivation, with the most abject and ignorant of the other. Spiritual pride or party-spirit can only find the difference of religion, where common sense, if it took time to reflect, would discern in an instant the difference of place and education. As the laws and prejudices of England did not protect the church of Rome, the Deists of our nation commenced their attacks on christianity, by assailing this defenceless quarter; here were directed the sneers and cavils of some of our eminent and popular writers. Those works,

in

in the hands of every one, and received without reflection by men who were easily induced to exchange the abhorrence of the nursery for the obloquy and derision of the instructor, lay the foundation of a theory; obsolete, exploded, and rejected notions, the refuse of the darkest ages; what some men uttered in their imbecility, and others endeavoured to uphold in their ambition, supply further materials; and the entire is completed by practical examples, from what is observed amongst the most untutored of all mankind, the depressed and browbeaten peasants of this island; all this is a very promising superstructure for unkind prepossessions, but certainly does not afford premises, from which any man should venture to draw a general conclusion, and yet upon these, judgment is every day pronounced against the universe.

I must still press, that I decline to entangle myself in controversy, and I may be permitted to pursue this track, and to assert this exemption, whilst I impugn no tenet, impeach no system, reproach no disciplime, and pretend to no learned disquisition. I view and observe on things as they lie near me upon the surface of society. I think it must tend to convince my protestant countrymen, that false notions have arisen amongst them of the effects and tendency of the Roman Catholic religion, if they will but advert to very familiar and very cogent evidence. You have men before your eyes, who having been educated in this church adhere to it inviolably; men of as strong and cultivated understandings, as any you can boast; as eager to promote the public good, as ready to tender all the benignant offices of private intercourse. A man of liberal condition in Ireland has no object to attain by persisting in the religion of our ancestors, but exposes himself to much spleen, and forfeits many

valuable gratifications. Would he make this sacrifice, if he found that he only thereby entangled himself in a scheme of folly and fraud, and became party to an unprofitable combination, adverse to public and private relations? Is the man I describe less qualified than his neighbour to judge of honour and honesty? Is he so abject as to be the slave of priestcraft, or so absurd, as not to rescue himself from that very foolish thraldom? Really it is going far to arrogate for Protestantism a monopoly of sound understanding. Suppose (for I will meet every presumption) that a man of this description happens to be indifferent, but yet refuses to revolt from the communion in which he was instituted, why this man is at once a more dispassionate judge, and a more convincive witness—perfectly instructed in the religion in all its directions and relations, and in all the feelings that it sets in motion, he sees nothing, which solemnly and in the face of Heaven he ought to reprobate. The firm believer finds every thing deserving to be retained; the latitudinarian has met with nought to provoke his censure. There is one test more in which all these descriptions concur, a display of sincerity in which scarcely any man can be supposed to trifle; he might be indolent as to himself, but would he confirm and commit his children to this discipline without a distinct conviction that it affords an excellent guide for life, and kind hopes and benignant consolation for that awful trial, when the curtain drops on the visions of mortality? Now these are testimonies beyond all reproof, they are exhibited by men, frequently as well qualified to judge, and far more competent from their knowledge of the subject to determine. I am ashamed of the necessity that requires me to point round to Europe, and to enquire of my countrymen, in what part of man-

ners,

ners, science, or civility, they excel these nations, which have been reared in the bosom and under the influence of the Roman Catholic religion? Let them compare themselves with that body of gentry, whom the miseries of the French revolution have afforded a near opportunity to appreciate; I do not insinuate that they are surpassed, but undoubtedly they are fully equalled. Now, if what is termed the Romish superstition has acted in one country to the injury of the human character, the effect of it, in every other must be similar. What occurs at Dublin must take place under the same circumstances in Paris and Vienna. I take the fact to stand thus: If Roman Catholics were to be met in Ireland, inferior to their fellow-religionists of other countries, the cause is to be sought, not in the discipline and creed, which are common to them with so great a portion of mankind; but in the agency of civil institutions, which are peculiar to their own island. Not they, but their accusers, deserve that reprehension which is profusely and familiarly dealt out by a very idle and misjudging vanity.

Consigning still theological matters to those who are adepts in that learning, I cannot refuse to observe upon two tenets, by which, or by the effects of them, social life is supposed to be affected. The supremacy of the Pope, and the imputed doctrine of exclusive salvation. If I were to select that matter, which beyond any thing else illustrates my argument, and enforces my counsel, I should recur to both or either of these points, as conspicuous instances of the pernicious consequence of neglect and irritation. It is apprehended that opinions relative to a future state extinguish the charities of life; certainly the fact is not so, for there is not the least doubt that persons live every day on very affectionate and endearing terms, of whom some must apprehend that

others

thers pursue what revelation reprobates and destines to divine vengeance. Can any man be a christian and not believe, that certain offences are marked for punishment hereafter, and can any man go through the world without contracting relations with those who fall into such frailties? But few I believe, very few there are, who, amidst the active concerns of life, turn aside to speculate on the eternity of another. Grant the suspicion to be well founded, and that the difference of religion does tend to the unkind sentiment that is apprehended, what course do you pursue? The offices of good neighbourhood, the intermixture of duties and relations, of services aud expectations, are calculated to counteract this inclination. They are not permitted to do so—you begin to avenge in this life the quarrels of futurity; you draw a line of separation, assigning distinct interests, views, and motives of action; if two classes of men were perfectly disposed to pass in amity through this life and to expect the like reciprocity in another, he, who malignantly wished to blast that harmony, should divide the parties into factions, and endeavour to place them on the respective footing of the Protestants and Catholics of Ireland. Whatever may be on this head the sentiment of the Catholics, those have little reason to complain, who insist upon anticipating the affront by a good round system of earthly exclusions; they conjecture that we are intent on the reserve of access to Heaven, and adhering to the old adage, that "the bird is better in the hand than in the bush," they secure the possession of the goods of this world to themselves, and leave to us the flattering expectancy of hereafter; now, for one, I do not hesitate in the face of my country to aver, that I have no sympathy with this tenet, as described and imputed, still less with the supposed effects of it; yet I am not the less a disfranchised subject of Ireland,

and

and if I had either ambition, or was endowed with qualifications to aspire to a situation more elevated than has befallen me, in that disfranchisement and in all the spleen and passions that arise out of it, I am indisputably certain that I should encounter an insurmountable barrier.*

In truth, the regular doctrines of the church of Rome upon this subject are the most lenient and forbearing of any religious association whatsoever. The several reformed churches were not out of their cradle, when they began to lisp, that to dissent from them was damnable. I believe there is a clause of this import in every creed that has been formed since, and exclusive of, that of the Apostles. The church of Rome classes among crimes, not mere error, but contumacy and obstinacy; and explains itself favourably with respect to those, whose ignorance is the effect of situation, or invincibly impressed by honest, though mistaken conviction. In this form I received the doctrine from venerable and learned divines, to whom my early years owed a considerable part of the debt of education. Similar is the language of Dr. Milner, a Roman Catholic clergyman, who has recently expounded the doctrines of his church, and not only is the reputation of that gentleman high, as it deserves to be, among the Roman Catholics of this empire, but he of late has been honoured, by the special appointment of the Roman court, with the episcopal character; no person can question the correctness of orthodoxy, which has received this testimony of approbation.

Yet, without any question, there have been ecclesiastical persons, ready and earnest to stretch to a very extravagant

* The asylum for female penitents, founded in Dublin, could only permit those, who were willing to profess the established religion; this occasioned an observation, that, at least from one lucrative department, there was no wish to exclude Romanists.

extravagant length their pretension to the divine favour. Every religious communion affords these instances, but at present it only concerns me to treat of the Roman Catholic. Now what results in point of proof from this contrariety of expositions? simply that there is a difference between the several teachers extremely well entitled to attention, and that you may, by adverting to the selection and to the education of clergymen, altogether correct the evil of uncharitable doctrines, and remove the tendency to foment unkindness.

But indeed you must do more, you must calm the animosities of the people; nothing is more natural than, that, when men have grounds for civil or political dislike they should extend their hatred to the utmost limits of conjecture. If it be rendered penal and inconvenient to profess a particular faith, the zealous favourers of that religion will necessarily shew their adherents, that they have some contingent advantage to atone for present suffering; the charities of life and the kindnesses of intercourse are not disturbed by notions relating to a future state; but men deal out damnation to each other, because these kindnesses and charities have been previously poisoned and perverted. It is curious to trace the variations of opinion on this very subject in the country we inhabit. As men mixed together in society, and interchanged acts of beneficence, you might observe them declining from the severity of the ancient maxims, qualifying their own dissent, and searching out apologies for that of the opposite party. Probably when the sword was sheathed at Limerick, there was scarcely a Roman Catholic in Ireland, who on the mixed ground of Invader, Williamite, and Protestant, did not consign his enemy to perdition; the sentiment continued, I believe, pretty much in vigour, until between forty and fifty years ago; I learn that clergymen;

clergymen, devoting other religious bodies to divine wrath, from about that period, were few, were listened to rather with astonishment than approbation; from twenty to fifteen years since, I am perfectly convinced, that no man broaching such notions would have been heard with patience. I have never known, in the course of my experience, of any instruction or discourse, in which it was touched on. I am inclined to admit that a greater degree of rancour, and generally more unkind feelings exist at this day, than during the years preceding 1790; the distance is short, and yet the variation is considerable; but to what will any man of common reflection ascribe the change? To the religion, or to the asperities of faction? To the writings of Dr. Duigenan, or the mass-book? What! a few short years sufficient to alter the character of a people, and the tendency of a religion: Not a single generation has passed away; and this accumulation of bigotry is supposed to have taken place amidst advances to refinement and opulence; in the face of an age, whose movements are any thing but retrograde. No credulity can acquiesce in such assertions; the thing is utterly impossible. Rather seek the explanation where it is to be found, and where evidence supports it. The Roman Catholics of Ireland increased in wealth under the original relaxation; they became familiarized to their country, and to its institutions; at the maturity of these feelings, they required to participate in the privileges which their fellow-citizens enjoyed, and of which these highly extolled the value and importance. The proposal was repelled fastidiously,—the influence of the crown and the consideration due to such a portion of the people prevailed to a certain extent over pride and petty interests; but in the course of a long and angry discussion, passion took

place of reason; reciprocal exasperations and resentments occurred; parties were formed, political in fact and motive, although under an ecclesiastical pretext and designation *. It was not religion which communicated to these parties their complexion and character, but the spirit and contention of politics perverted, depraved and diffused a venom over religion. I know it is not unusual to assert, that the indisposition of parties is to be referred to the blind attachments and antipathies of the Roman Catholics; but the fact is, that this character is very nearly, if not altogether, fictitious. The Roman Catholics do not, that I know of, cherish writers who traduce and inveigh against their fellow-citizens; they have no exasperating commemorations. There are no men of a more liberal turn of mind than the Irish Catholics of education and property: The peasant and populace are not, any more than the like description elsewhere is, a class of philosophers. But men, on the other side, who ought to be enlightened, entertain illiberal feelings, and justify them by a charge that those are not enlightened, who might be expected to be vulgar. If corresponding ranks be compared, the balance of rash antipathy is infinitely with the Protestants. Try the cessation of conflicting interests; animosity will be subdued; christian charity will revive; and religion on every side will proceed to its ends, as heretofore it was wont, and as it does in other countries, with blessings and benignity.

The

* It is idle to speak of the cause of religion, in the controversies between the Catholics and those Protestants who support the coercive system. The matter really in dispute is, Whether shall the property, which came into notice since 1778, be admitted to a parity of influence and distinction with that created during the forty years previous. For this point of precedence, in the eye of reason of nearly the same import as the pretension of two ladies in a dancing-room, our energies are cramped, and the British empire brought to extremities.

The matter of the Pope's supremacy has been so often, so explicitly, and unequivocally explained, has been the subject of so many oaths and avowals, that he who continues to misapprehend it, remains liable to the charge of erring by his own election. Every Roman Catholic, demanding in this realm the smallest civil privilege, must qualify himself by disclaiming upon oath any civil or temporal jurisdiction or authority in the Roman Pontiff. Persons of that communion do certainly maintain that, as an institution of an order of bishops among the clergy took place at the organization of the christian church; so, at the same time, and by the same divine founder, was a Primacy amongst the bishops themselves established. I presume there are in England a multitude of persons who conscientiously admit the sacred character and functions of episcopacy; they will allow that the bishop of London exercises in his diocese, and the archbishop of Canterbury in his province, jurisdictions which Christ intended; but do they therefore suppose, that either of these Prelates is to command the militia or the train-bands, or to regulate the proceedings of the quarter-sessions?—he may warn his subjects against sin; he may direct and tranquillize conscience; but I presume no man suspects that this prerogative could be strained to a right of interfering with civil duties. Thus the supremacy of the see of Rome applies not to the ordinary affairs of life, but to the feelings of conscience; on these it acts; and where jurisdiction arises, it proceeds by certain fixed and canonical rules; nothing is fluctuating, capricious, or unascertained—all is easy to be known and accommodated. You might as well conjecture that the parish priest, in either church, was likely to claim the right of regulating the tolls and

markets. Let the Pope outstep the line of his ecclesiastical situation, he becomes a temporal prince, and like any other temporal prince will be obeyed in proportion to the force he can employ, or to his means, by dispensing favour, of procuring attachment. If you insist upon imagining extreme cases, there is not, or ever was there an institution, which will stand this ordeal; let a man proceed forward with theory, and not correct or guide himself by probability and practice, he may give a plausible form to any, the most monstrous proposition; a speculatist, taking things literally, might very speciously represent, that the courts of Chancery or King's Bench were armed with such powers, that they must necessarily swallow up every other jurisdiction; he might fancy that the three estates, which compose our parliament, were calculated for eternal and irreconcileable discord; yet we know how decidedly the facts run the other way, and we know with the equal certainty of experience, that the supremacy of the Pope is consistent with every modification of authority, and compatible with every possible form of civil government.

But have the pretensions of the Tiara never been extravagant? Have they never tended to embroil mankind, and involve the common wealth in turmoils and difficulties? Unquestionably they have; and are such disasters not fit to be cautiously avoided? I must put another question:—Do you pursue this end by the means which are the best adapted, the most judicious and adviseable? I apprehend you do not; and that whilst you inveigh against and thwart the supremacy of the Pope, you confer upon that prelate considerably greater influence, than if you were, so far as the necessity extends, to yield to the opinion which sanctions his prerogative,

and

and condescend to give it a direction consonant to the public interest. When we treat of the times in which Rome displayed her offensive ambition, we should embrace in our consideration all the circumstances accompanying the respective transactions. Governments were feeble; the nobility every where was factious—approaching near to the crown in power, and imitating it in appearance and authority, they were strongly disposed to emulation and envy, and embraced with avidity every colourable occasion of resistance. Such movements were easy at a time, when arms were the sole concern and occupation of at least the acting part of mankind. The Papal See in every country disposed of great dignities and affluent benefices; by these means it secured adherents; every Monastery was a Citadel holding for the Pope. The monks were often aliens, but always detached from the state and its civil interests; their superiors were nominated from Rome; the officers of the respective orders, with whom they preserved correspondence, were strongly bound to that court, where for the most part they resided. Every gratification came from abroad, and every hope was directed to the same quarter. Scarcely a passion or a feeling had access, but those which tended to estrange the orders from the civil, and to bind them to the head of ecclesiastical, authority; they of course were ready to assert and forward all the claims of the latter, and they could do so with more effect as they were a numerous and widely extended body, strangers either in fact or feeling to the country in which they were accidentally seated. If you can suppose a recurrence of these circumstances and of this condition, then will I allow the objectionable parts of ecclesiastical history to be proper precedents for our regulation. In all men opportunity kindles ambition, and I do not claim for the Popes

an

an exemption from the foibles, which, when occasion calls them forth, have been discovered in other Princes.

Let us suppose the Pope inclined to make an irregular and corrupt use of the reverence, which attends his sacred character: he must act through the medium of the Bishops. I am very far from imputing sordid dispositions to that venerable body; I know them sufficiently to pronounce, that the love of money is not an ingredient in the composition (even under the least favourable consideration) of their character; but I do not disparage them, when I judge of them, as of men, that, if the government of the country essentially promotes and provides for their accommodation, they will never strain the doctrines of their church, or abuse their facilities for influence, in order to disturb their own enjoyments. I have not a doubt that they are ready to make great sacrifices for the real tenets of their religion, but I cannot lightly be induced to believe, that in the teeth of their own quiet and their own interest they would propound a forced exposition of these tenets, out of respect to the bad passions, the corrupt conceits, and extra-judicial fancies of their Primate. Men may safely be permitted to acknowledge any distant superior they think fit, provided he neither supports, nominates, nor rewards them; and surely it is fully in the competence of our government to provide by easy precautions, against the possibility of this interference*.

The

* I would propose that government should take upon itself to maintain and conduct whatever intercourse must necessarily subsist between the court of Rome and the Roman Catholic Prelacy of Ireland, that a satisfactory tribunal should be instituted for differences arising between the bishops and their clergy, and for other matters of diocesan discipline, for which, appeals at present lie to Rome. Such appeals are with the Pope's consent prohibited in France, and were prohibited by the statute of premunire when the Catholic religion was established in these countries. I would recommend to vest in the

crown

The truth is, if you place their interests in another scale, the Bishops are the very exact counterpoise to any extravagant pretensions, which may be advanced on behalf of the Popedom. Grant the Papal supremacy to be a controlling and inspecting jurisdiction—who are the objects of it? the Bishops; who are concerned to keep it within bounds, and maintain limitations on it? Undoubtedly the Bishops; and this course they surely will pursue, if they are perfectly and altogether independent. Those, upon whom any superiority acts, are uniformly the persons to preserve it from encroaching; thus the natural opposition to a prince will be found in his great nobility; to a nobleman in the surrounding gentry; to the commander of a regiment in his staff, and so on in every relation; I will venture to assert that if, in modern times since his power of nominating has been withdrawn, the Pope has attempted to interfere with the bishops of Catholic countries, more instances will be found of vigorous resistance, than there existed in the prior state of things, of prompt and easy acquiescence.

When

crown the nomination of bishops, but, (in order to obviate the objections arising from more intimate relations with another religious communion) subject to an inviolable convention that the appointment should be exercised conformable to the recommendation of such one or more Roman Catholics of distinction, as his Majesty should think fit from time to time to nominate for the purpose; this regulation would reciprocally connect the church and the laity, and check the disposition to form an ecclesiastical corporation with high clerical pretensions, to which, acting and combining together, the heads of this church would be otherwise inclined, and which I really think to be the weak side in their character. To impeach their loyalty is preposterous inadvertence.

It was my intention to have given a distinct section to the matter of this note, but the necessity of other concerns obliges me to close this discussion without proceeding to the extent I had designed. I offer this outline as a substitute.

When we see a prospect that the concurring circumstances of the middle ages shall overspread society, then will I admit it prudent to adopt measures of precaution; when Kings become feeble and Popes grow puissant, we may guard the former against the encroachments of the latter. If history instructs us that ecclesiastical ambition and intrigues have sometimes tended to convulse the commonwealth, it informs us equally that where an efficient government has kept in restraint the follies and vices of mankind, the clerical character was, as much as any other, controlled in its untoward propensities. History records the faults of that character, but it infinitely more abounds in instances of its virtue. He, who would have no Pontiff, because all were not meek, must refuse upon the same ground to accept a Pastor, from any Church or designation whatsoever; the annals of all religions record so many instances of turbulence and ambition, that I must protest against limiting the imputation to any one in particular; these matters, where they occurred, were the faults and foibles of the respective ages, of situation, and of circumstances; but because such occurrences took place in rude and ignorant times, are we to apprehend a like visitation in the present? I should as soon think it necessary to revive the obsolete statutes against wearing Glibs, against ploughing by the horse's tail, or against Coigne and Livery, as disturb myself and vex my neighbours about a matter so utterly impracticable, as the restoration of the Pope to the dangerous pre-eminence he enjoyed in the 13th and 14th centuries. Perhaps it will astonish those, who have spoken and written so much, and so speciously on this subject, to hear, that what they have placed under all these aspects of hideous danger, what has agitated their feelings, and haunted their imaginations, is little else than a dispute about names and terms.

terms. The king of France, before the revolution, was, and the present despot of that country is, effectually and really, although not nominally, as much head of the church, as the king of England. Now, where no prepossession existed in favour of the Pope's supremacy, the mere politician would probably not perceive a necessity to create it; but, finding such an opinion in force, he as probably will not enter into contention with it; especially when he can accommodate matters with so much ease, and is subject only to the necessity of a light and practicable management.

If it be true, that the supremacy of the Pope renders him master of those who admit the doctrine, what becomes of a fact perfectly obvious and familiar? Never did discontent run so high among the Catholics of Ireland, as at that moment when the sovereign Pontiff was altogether in the hands of our government, a pensioner of our state, and supported by British guards in his capital; if the Pope preserved an influence over the public mind of this country, would he not have employed it at that moment for his benefactors? or if our ministers suspected the existence of any such influence, would they have hesitated to save themselves a vast deal of trouble by resorting to it, as they might have done with certainty and ease, and with perfect confidence? Must we accede to the charge, that the Roman Catholic religion will never coalesce with a Protestant sovereign, whilst we see that in the contentions of America, the Roman Catholics of Canada were the onl subjects who preserved fidelity? Nearer to our own times, Malta, Catholic if any place on earth be such, anxiously solicited to be preserved in the number of British subjects, whilst the Protestants of Hanover abandoned without an effort their ancient sovereign of their own religion. These reflections, which

surely

surely are sufficiently plain and familiar, appear to me totally to repel from the Roman Catholic system, those calumnies which rancour has imputed; of which in this island, the theory has been admitted rather greedily, and which have been found in no small degree to influence persons of light reflection in their practice. Folly and ignorance have introduced congenial practices and notions, among the haunts of illiteracy and weakness, among the obscure and uninformed members of every society that has existed; but I know not of any approved and general practice of the Roman Catholic church, which a man is not the better for observing*. It is the religion of the human heart, which, having grown old with man, is admirably adapted to his wants and infirmities; it meets human weakness at the greatest number of points, and applies the greatest number of consolations and correctives. I may be told, that my education has familiarized me with defects, and that my judgment in this respect has been swayed by impressions early made, and now become irresistible. Upon a point of doctrine I can comprehend, that education will prepare one man to receive, what another will be disposed by his original habits to reject with ridicule. But those, of which I have treated, are

* There are objections to the precept, of abstaining on certain days from particular kinds of food, which would be obviated, if the rigid rule were changed to a recommendation. Self-denial and docility would in this instance be equally evinced, and equally conspicuous, and by not placing the observance on a footing with the high moral obligations, the danger is avoided of familiarizing men with the breach of what they had been led by early impressions to reverence. It is vain to expect that in this age, the injunction of fasts, which so frequently recur, will be observed with any thing like general attention.

This, however, is matter of great delicacy; it would perhaps be productive of greater inconvenience to vary the land-marks of ancient practice.

are matters of fact and practice; there can here be no such latitude or diversity. A man must be an egregious simpleton to deem that to be salutary or innocent which tends to evil; it is a plain alternative; and we may be permitted to pronounce with some confidence, upon that which has been long observed, which has been viewed in every shape, and with means of more intimate acquaintance than those who speak upon theory and hearsay. My testimony cannot be accused of improper bias; there is no inducement of interest or ambition; I am not in the way to receive favour from any part of the Catholic body; neither is the course I pursue, calculated to gain upon the kindness of the strenuous and active partisans, who might be able to decide a popular inclination.

If it should be the fortune of this essay to be at any time considered out of Ireland, it will appear, indeed, superfluous to have undertaken this vindication; yet I am much mistaken, if the matter of it does not involve some of our most urgent necessities. There are persons in Ireland, by no means to be heedlessly passed over either on the score of cultivation of mind or of situation, who, having fancied to themselves a popery, dwell upon the creature of their imagination, and believe it to be something too mean, too much below contempt, to deserve the pains of any sort of management; who think that a great deal is done, and that all should be perfect and complete, under the condescension of a contumelious sufferance; but can you affix these marks of superciliousness, when men, as wise and as honourable as yourselves, and in this respect better informed, see, in the system you reprobate, a guide for their own steps through life, and an asylum to which the faithful parent does not hesitate to consign his progeny? The process of reasoning producing this impression upon his mind, may have been in-

operative upon yours, as he in like manner does not yield to your conviction. These things happen every day; you may disbelieve the expositions of doctrines which this religion presents, but it is impossible to despise it. Who will venture to treat that as an object of contempt, which some of the first in talent and intelligence have followed with reverence and admitted on conviction; which nations, as polished as any upon earth, have anxiously and respectfully preserved; which has been considered by them to be a precious and valuable deposit, the safeguard of morals and cement of society?

What will here be observed frequently occurs in conversation, and may therefore be anticipated, "the religion of the enlightened Roman Catholics is liberal and clear of superstition; but there is another class, whom we denominate papists; these are bigots, and of a complexion widely different." This distinction has been so totally confined to this country, that some, perhaps, will not hesitate to call it altogether Hibernian. Translated into plain language, it amounts to this: Education makes a difference in man; and as, when the inclination leads to good, the difference, upon your shewing is considerable, is very much to be desired, and very decisive; then it would appear to me a process of little ingenuity to deduce this consequence and this alone: *that you ought to advert to, and multiply, the means, by which the favourable alteration is produced; means which have proved so salutary in correcting what you suppose to be the tendency of that religion.* You should provide education for the people and afford them the opportunity of that improvement, of which you admit, and are convinced by evidence clearly in point, that their religion is susceptible.

I go on with this fancy of two sects, although it must be pretty plain that it is a pure chimera, and, in truth,

means

means only the ordinary division of mankind, into the vulgar of light and credulous mind and heated imagination; and into those, who having been improved by habits of reflection and a sense of character and interest, have attained a more safe, discreet, and collected turn of thought, a deliberate understanding of duties, and a judgment which refuses to be imposed on. In the fundamentals of religion, which are not easy to be shaken, both these descriptions inviolably concur; then, the mischief is not produced by the high and immutable points of faith; it is in the accessaries of religion, which vary with the difference of situation and national habits; now, so far the prospect is most inviting; I have endeavoured to shew, that, in the present instance, most of these accessorial matters are of your own creation, and all of them within the reach of regulation and management. In the Roman Catholic whom you cannot blame you have a model not to be refused; you have a point whither you shall steer your course, and a light to direct you in your passage: you have only to require of the bigots to approach nearer to the example of men, whose religion is allowed even by them to be without exception; but would it not be wise to put a little forward and hold forth in a favourable point of view, the parties whose habits and demeanour are to be imitated? The example you approve will more readily be followed, if you give honour and credit to those who afford it.

Can we venture to submit to this test the policy practised in our country? The law of the land, it is true, appoints limits for the pretensions of a Roman Catholic; the justness and aptness of that regulation I am no wise disposed to admit; but I shall for the present defer to engage in that controversy, and confine myself to some, and these few and cursory, observations on

the application to the Roman Catholics of Ireland of the ordinary modes of calling forth exertion, and directing the public sentiment. " 'Tis the duty of this division of the community to obey and to act for the public safety and advantage." Assuredly it is, but the same things are the duty of all other subjects; and yet we know that there are certain methods of conciliation, to which the science of government resorts, in order to render these duties more prompt and palatable. The law of Ireland, as it was modified eleven years ago, allows a considerable latitude of employment and promotion in the public service to a Catholic; it might not have been detrimental to the state, so to use this admission, as to call forth the emulation, engage the mind, and fill the ambition of this people; they might have been invited with salutary effect to the career of useful activity and honourable occupation under our monarchy; the display of successful example, taken from their own body, might have encouraged the pursuit, and rendered the invitation more attractive; mixing with their fellow-subjects in the community of views and passions, this corporation, if such it is to be considered, would have been dissolved, the corporate spirit removed, and the entire mass identified with the general inclination of the country. Perhaps, the adoption of Catholics after this manner, will be considered as extending to them the sphere of condescension; but it would in fact be to convert the concession made in 1793, from a special and limited favour, into an engine of public policy; yet in such a space of time; under so many vicissitudes of administration; some courting, others repelling, popularity; no person has been found in any profession, in any department of business, worthy to attain a situation, to which the opinion of the world annexes credit, respect,

or

or confidence *; no civil, no military distinction or advancement of consideration. Does there really exist in Ireland, a temper rashly and unwarrantably alienated from our established authorities? The assertion is frequently made, and whatever may be my own opinion, I shall proceed as admitting the charge in all its extent and consequences. Does this temper meet with something congenial and encouraging (I will still suppose a fact) among the Catholics? It would be desirable to withdraw those who have been misled, and to check the further progress of the mischievous delusion; in this point of view, I should think it not time misapplied, to examine the propriety of this vast and dreary exclusion†. A more effectual corrective could not be devised for the errors to which our population are liable, than to present to them men, who, entertaining various common feeling with themselves, might be supposed most near to co-operation; but who adopt a conduct directly the reverse;

* Lord Camden proceeded farther than any other viceroy, of the interval in question, in conferring personal favours, especially of a description to enhance the weight and credit of the receiver. Under his administration, two peerages were re-established, a third, and two or three baronetages created; one gentleman was placed in a public office of some note.

† Whatever may be the cause of this negative on the adoption of Catholics; the effect is to render the several relaxing laws, rather the reverse of what they appear to mean. It is no advantage to induce men to prepare themselves for what they are disappointed in attaining.

I think it not unlikely, that the Roman Catholics of superior condition are somewhat backward in familiarizing themselves with our vice-regal court. Their habits have not ran that way; but surely many things suggest that a free and extended intercourse ought to subsist between the chiefs of the government and this great branch of the community. It is not possible to understand Ireland without seeing a good deal of the Catholics.

Would it not tend to correct, and draw them off from this reserve, if a Lord Lieutenant, commencing his government, should place some of the Catholic youth among his aids-du-camp, or other officers of his establishment?

verse; who are earnest in supporting the government, anxious to deserve, and proud to obtain the flattering distinction of its acknowledgment. There are many features in which the rebel and outrageous orange-man perfectly resemble; one is a common wish and belief that the Catholic inclines to innovation; but how do you act upon the hopes and conviction of the former, if he behold these very Catholics at the head of troops to meet him in the field, or engaged in devising measures for his discomfiture? Still more, if he perceive those of that description, who take a decided part against him, armed with sufficient influence to decide the less considerate of their communion? Objects probably have not appeared, who deserve this attention; it may be so; but every other European state has tried this people with better effect; deplorable, indeed, would be the case, and most poignant the reflection, if we are to suppose that, under an admirable form of government, under a reign, which kindness and amelioration eminently characterize, our own sovereign encounters a penury of qualifications for his service; whilst France, and Spain, and Italy, and Germany have, with the fullest approbation, called individuals of the same stock to elevated trust and honorable preferment. I wish to be understood as expressing my mere speculations, such as any observer, even the indifferent writer of a tour, might offer upon the resources of the country for regulation and settlement. A barren eligibility, whatever may be its nominal extent, will never compose, and form to beneficial purposes, the feelings and passions of this nation. The patronage of the crown ought to be let in, and act, upon the Catholics of Ireland, as it does upon all other classes of his Majesty's subjects. This language is not claim but reason.

When

When I treat of the permanent and perpetually recurring management of the Catholic relation, I must be supposed to refer to the principle invariably residing at home, not to fugitive administrations from the other side of the channel. It will be curious, if not instructive, shortly to trace the variations in this respect, of action and sentiment. I really believe, that when the proposal on behalf of the Catholics came before the Irish Parliament in 1791, one half the members of that Assembly knew * less of their character and composition than of any remote people, described by gazetteers and geographers. I begin with the Catholics, at, and after the Revolution. It it is very certain, that if an option between the house of Stuart and any other Dynasty had been fairly offered to the Irish Catholics, at any time subsequent to the Revolution, they would without hesitation have transferred their attachment. They recollected with no small degree of warmth, how cruelly they had been abandoned by Charles II. in the cabinet; and in the field, after a manner more contumelious and revolting to their feelings, by his unfortunate brother. There is not a peasant in Ireland, who to the present day will not recal these two incidents, and mark them with a vehemence fully in-

 dicative

* One still meets sensible men, who are so little informed as to imagine, that the priests govern all the public and private affairs of the Catholics. Never was an error more totally fundamental. According to their several degrees of attachment to religious duties, the Catholics are fond to observe and to feel, the spiritual ministry of the clergy; but they are extremely, indeed I think rather excessively, desirous to circumscribe them within that circle; this is particularly the case in large cities. I think a priest, who should present himself at an aggregate meeting of all religions in Dublin, would be more patiently heard, than if he were to offer his advice at a special assembly of Catholics; there he would very probably be considered an intruder.

dicative of the sting which they impress on his memory. Yet they continued Jacobites until the accession of his present Majesty. In this there is no enigma. Harassed and trodden down by the popery laws, harassed still more by all the vexatious inquisitions which spring from this perverse system, or which grew up with it; they looked to a change of government as the ouly relief of their necessities—*Volvenda dies in attulit ultro.* The present reign commenced an epoch, which, whilst honorable feeling forms part of our national character, the annals of Ireland must record with affectionate sensibility. The virtues of the house of Brunswick, and its marked mildness of administration were at length extended to this portion of its subjects. This was the dawn of our national prosperity. His Majesty's reign comprises the entire modern history of Ireland, and although clouded for some time back, presents by far our happiest and most brilliant æra.

The effect of this salutary alteration became sensible through all the details of our political economy. The men who reluctantly acquiesced in this benignant course of proceeding, felt their fortunes augment in consequence beyond their most sanguine expectation; confidence arose; capital began to fix, and property to diffuse over the country. The facts of a considerable accretion of property about this time are obvious; we had evidence of it in the vast extension of Dublin and other large towns, in the great increase of expensive establishments, and the rising demand for all the articles of commerce. The property created in Ireland by the first relaxation of the Popery laws may be considered under these heads:—Capitalists who, when they had acquired a sufficiency in trade, would have taken their children to foreign countries in search of promotion,

tion, and ultimately fixed there; natives of Ireland, who were invited by the more favourable circumstances of the times to return with the fortunes they acquired abroad, and to lay them out in purchases within the country; but by far the most signal branch of the public prosperity was the incitement to industry, by the facility of converting personal into real property, and by the inducement to improve upon long terms. The national accumulation, under these several items, may certainly be rated at several millions. Before the introduction of tillage to any momentous extent, land rose by sudden jerks from six to twenty-six shillings per acre. Whilst all the powers of the country were directed solely against Popery, lands had been much neglected, and cultivation so feebly practised, that proprietors, during the first thirty years of the late century, were happy to close with any person who would take leases for ever, at the then current value; the fortunes, which grew up in Ireland under these circumstances, are beyond conception.* I recal the fact, that the portion of our landed interest, who have so eminently profited by the mild and judicious policy of these days, may see that the advantage is not, as they imagine, solely to the

* The rise of lands is known as a memorable æra to this hour in the south of Ireland. The extraordinary encrease of value induced land-owners to enclose ground, which had lain heretofore in common, and this circumstance, being resented by the common people, occasioned the first tumults, called White-Boys. In all countries, a certain advance in opulence produced an alteration in society; exasperated at the rise of prices and necessity of encreased exertions, and not finding their means keep pace with their necessities, the common people have expressed their feelings by their turbulence; but when they find the effort ineffectual, they at length submit, and matters accommodate to the new order. Thus the Captain Right, and Captain Doe, and Father Murphy of our days, are the Wat Tyler, and Jack Straw, and Parson Ball of England.

Roman Catholics. The effect of all these circumstances upon the lower orders has been such, that the farmer, who at the commencement of the present reign, would have been deemed comfortable with a very few head of cattle, possesses at present several hundred pounds; and it is as common at this time for a young couple to commence, after their marriage, with fifty or sixty pounds, as it then was to start with a few utensils of not higher value than the same number of shillings. The general condition of the peasants has certainly not altogether advanced in exact proportion with the value of capital; but you do not hear at this day of a labouring man, who supports his family on potatoes and salt with the mere beverage of water; from thirty to forty years back, such things certainly existed. Within that time our state of society has assumed altogether a new aspect; it was then we began to recover from the effects of the contest in which the Regicides were successful, when, involving loyalty and faction in one common ruin, they made a new partition and settlement of the country. This event must be constantly present to the mind of a man, who examines the affairs of Ireland; it is in fact the key which explains the state, and object, and confirmation of parties, and the point upon which turns a great part even of our modern transactions. The Roman Catholics, having been invariably treated as public enemies, looked to the hopes of better times, under a change of government; they were Jacobites *, and it would indeed have been extraordinary

* I remember to have conversed on this subject with a Catholic gentleman of great respectability and intelligence, and who was in his latter days as firmly devoted as Sir Robert Walpole had been, to the House of Brunswick; he was probably born before the year 1730. "I was a Jacobite," said

ordinary if they were otherwise. The Protestants at the same time recollecting, that king James's * government projected to repeal the act of settlement, by which Cromwell's grants had been confirmed, were outrageous in their attachment to the Revolution establishment. Under the appearance of zeal for the rival families, we were rent by our personal feelings and concerns; the one party panting for greater ease to themselves, the other dreading that any relaxation of a severe and rigid discipline might contribute to revive with some degree of force, claims on which they looked back with very jealous apprehensions. The entire care of the state, and its power from the head to the most minute subdivisions of authority, were all employed in a wasteful warfare against the obnoxious religionists. From 1746, the hopes of the exiled family and of their adherents gradually disappeared, and with them the anxious apprehensions of our Irish settlers; the Protestants became daily more calm and forbearing; the Catholics of course were insensibly reconciled to their situation, and acquired

said he, "without reflection; I took my opinions from my father with my "inheritance; when I found myself more gently treated, I came to exa- "mine, and saw the weakness of my predilection."

* James II. never was personally popular in Ireland; at the Restoration, he took an enormous grant of lands from the Crown, whilst the officers, who served abroad with his brother, were turned out of their estates, and left without redress or reparation. After the death of this prince, either in consequence of his own direction, or that of his family, his body was deposited in the church of the English Benedictines in Paris, his heart was transmitted in an urn to the Scotch, and his bowels offered in another to the Irish College. I recollect a tradition preserved in the House, that the Principal for the time refused admittance to the urn, and accompanied its rejection with very sarcastic reproaches on this preference to the other kingdoms over a people, who had been such victims to his family. The urn was transferred to St. Omer, where it remained, I believe, to the Revolution.

acquired settled habits. I think these sentiments and feelings had arrived to a sufficient degree of perfection, to induce me to fix at about the year 1770 the date of sensible amendment; industry had indeed found an earlier introduction into the northern province; but, in the other parts of Ireland, the dawn of prosperity was from the time that the vexatious inquisition after Popery was given up; and that opulence, which in our days has advanced so considerably, is to be traced to the year 1778, when the public feeling obtained legal effect and sanction by a partial repeal of the laws which prohibited the professors of the Romish religion from acquiring landed property.

As the Catholics became opulent, it might have been presumed that they would have turned their thoughts to political privileges; some provision or preparation ought to have been made for a contingency of such very probable occurrence. If our former aristocracy had foreseen what surely was sufficiently obvious, and had anticipated the desire, they would have held the public mind completely in their hands; or if determined never to accommodate, they should have contented themselves with a discreet and moderate display of their advantages, and have inculcated the same forbearance to the inferior members of their corporation; but they were, the one and the other, as well within parliament as without, the most mutinous, the most termagant, and vociferous politicians in the universe. No people were ever more fond of political privileges than the Protestants of Ireland; they sought every occasion to amplify their franchises, and displayed, what it was their lot to enjoy, with the fullest ostentation; in the men, who, standing by the side of their fellow-citizens, were daily witnesses of their parade of pre-

pre-eminence, a disposition to imitate, and a desire of similar advantages, were naturally awakened; to think of preserving what was not to be participated; to continue the exercise of all the frequently recurring franchises of electing in the face of an affluent and intelligent people, whose vanity or whose interest was to receive no similar indulgence; all this appears to be absurdity little short of madness. Accustomed to domineer, our ruling party had grown fond of their dominion, and were not aware of a necessity that had grown to maturity before their eyes, but most unaccountably without their observation; they did not perceive the actual approximation to equality, of which the legal equality was a necessary consequence. It was the current practice a few years back in Ireland, that every man of property should educate one of his children (most frequently the eldest) to the profession of a Barrister; the Catholics had no sooner perfected their settlement under the act of 1778, than they turned their eyes very naturally to this common attribute of certain situations. Admission to the bar ought, towards the year 1785, to have moved as a concession from the governing powers of the country: The matter had been put to them, and, whatever might have been the alleged objection, the true reason of with-holding this advantage was, that the superior profession of the law was supposed to be favourable to education and energy, and by receiving Catholics in this department, a body of active men would be formed to lead forward their brethren. The professions of the law were not a matter on which it could be of moment to make a stand; politics and parliament were the forbidden ground, which it was designed to fence round and protect; but the means adapted were surely weak and inefficient. Whilst the

Roman

Roman Catholics continued to acquire property, they never could want leaders to stimulate their energies, or to point the way to any object of obvious wish or probable attainment. By admitting to the bar the Roman Catholics of education and talents, the chance would be rather to diminish than encrease their leaders; for in this case talents would be absorbed in forensic cares and the diversities of professional employment. There was no political regulation to prevent the growth of talents; none to frustrate the effects of a good education; by opening the professions, these qualities would have been engaged in the service either of the crown or of the public; by closing these paths to occupation and preferment, the qualities were not extinguished, but the possessors of them were left more at leisure to speculate on the grievances and privations to which they were condemned, to diffuse discontent, and animate the public to seek redress; clearly the professions ought to have followed very quickly after the right to acquire property in 1778 and 1782; before that right was conceded, the discouragement to found a Catholic family in Ireland was so very considerable, that every man, who acquired property, destined his children for active life in foreign countries; and persons of talents, considering Ireland a hopeless, unproductive field, turned their thoughts to some pursuit out of it; so soon as the industrious were desired to remain, so soon as property was permitted to accumulate, the other descriptions would of course take up their residence; the question then was not, whether the talents and education of the Catholic body were like to furnish leaders, but whether these leaders were more formidable in a condition of disgust and despair; or when they were connected with other men of like qualifications, employed in active and congenial

pursuits

pursuits and with reasonable prospects of gratification; but it was hoped that, men of pretensions would be induced to conform, in order to enter these professions; there, again, the calculation was miserably erroneous. At the period of life at which young men mark out the course they will adopt, they usually are under the influence of parents or guardians, and the impressions of their education are strong and recent; a youth in these circumstances may well be supposed rather to embark in a less desirable career than to violate his feelings. This is the season of sentiment; towards thirty, ambition opens in the riper mind; the former restraints become weaker; new habits are formed, and less rigid notions adopted; in that state of mind the change of religion might not be difficult; then, if it were wished to separate the talents from the population of the Catholic body, the former should have been invited to engage in the professions, reserving the honorable and lucrative distinctions to conformists. In the year 1786, a limited admission to the professions would have been received as a boon; the latent consequences would never have been perceived, and the measure would have calmly taken the direction I mention. In 1792 it was given, but the public mind had already passed to other expectations; it was not considered an act of condescension, or kindness on the part of government, and the vehement contention, which this and other discussions have produced, renders men more than ever tenacious of their religion. The limitations, which were then made, will probably never produce a conformity; so that in this instance, the state was ungracious without advantage, and indeed after all, how far does it alter the case, whether an individual be an avowed Roman Catholic, or a reluctant Conformist? I do not entertain a doubt,

that the public morals of Ireland would, upon enquiry, be found to have sustained the most serious injury, by this practice of inviting the violation of early impressions as a sacrifice to interest. The parties seldom seek to reconcile themselves by conviction to the change that is put upon them. With us, conformity seems to have been the nursery of Deism; to the frequent recurrence of it, whilst the Popery laws were in force, I believe we may attribute the fact, that the Protestant gentlemen of Ireland have appeared less observant of the forms of their church, than those of a corresponding rank in England.

Thus did our acting aristocracy close its eyes to the Catholic concern, and proceed with that unwise and improvident assumption, that every man in the land was a Protestant, and that a matter of this nature might be acted upon as a practical truth, because the law presumed it;* at length the impatience of the people pressed the question, with solemnity and seriousness, upon their notice; still, even in these circumstances, opportunities occurred to retain a dominion over the popular inclinations. A body of the Catholics, considerable for rank and opulence, probably appalled at the aspect of popular exertion, determined to oppose the authority of their names † to the growing spirit of their brethren;—by a public act they consigned their cause to

* The late Lord Chancellor Bowes, under this pedantic impression, is said to have declared in his court, that the law did not suppose any man to be a Catholic, whilst more than every second person he met in the street was of tha description.

† It must be admitted, that this act was inconsiderate and headstrong, and taken up with either an utter ignorance, or reprehensible heedlessness, of the disposition of the country. The difference between public papers ill and well executed, in point of composition, tended, as much as any thing else, to decide against the Roman Catholic aristocracy.

to the government of the country, and implied a recommendation to follow the example. The feelings of the nation had by this time passed beyond the professions of the law, and aspired to the magistracy of counties, and such little situations of local value. These matters ought to have been frankly given up, and the concession ought to have been made to appear a return for the confidence expressed by this part of the Catholics, and a reward of their example; it would have been the establishment of an influence, which in the government of Ireland might for ever have been relied on. By capitulating with the persons, who put themselves forward on this occasion, their lead and influence would have been for ever established in the most preponderating degree; the contrary course, which was then adopted, gave the Catholic public to understand, that possibly they might extort, but certainly had no hope to negotiate. It was generally understood, that the Administration of the day had seen the propriety of this capitulation, and determined for a time to compliment the seceding Aristocracy, by granting at their request, and apparently at their instance, to the Catholic body a good proportion of the disputed privileges; but the project was beaten down by the interference of the leading members of Parliament, who represented to Government, that the facilities for supporting an interest in their several counties would have been impaired, if they were compelled to admit a partnership of the Catholics; the gentlemen who threw themselves upon the grace and justice of the state, having been completely foiled and left without support and countenance, sustained a loss of influence, which never has been retrieved, and which, if the party to whom I allude, really desired to guide the

country in the ways of peace and propriety, they must have felt as a very serious detriment. Another year and an increase of popular effervescence rendered that but a short procrastination, which had been purchased by this lavish profusion of the resources of order and management.

If the dominant interests in Ireland understood the ground on which they stood, they might have perceived, that, having petulantly withdrawn from the jurisdiction of England, they could not expect to be supported in these petty interests and peevish passions, which did not involve the general economy of the empire; if they knew the country about them, they would have been convinced, that no men were more intent on preserving the calm course of public tranquillity, than the propertied part of the Catholics;—never were any men more sensibly alive to the mischiefs of commotion; their wealth, mostly personal and floating, was distributed in the various departments of subordinate industry; they were so much a scattered people, and so diversified in views and passions, that the most difficult thing to be conceived is a combination amongst them. The proceedings of large towns are generally more ardent and energetic than those of the country; the inhabitants of the latter would not easily have assorted with those of the former; if they at all approached, they would have been repelled by the first ebullition of intemperance. One circumstance alone could powerfully unite, and reduce to something near unanimity, a body composed of parts, so heterogeneous, so discordant among themselves, and so repellent from each other; this was to rouse their pride, to irritate their passions, and pronounce every expectation, they could form, inadmissible. This provocation was administered to the fullest extent that can be supposed, and it produced an effec

exactly

exactly suitable*. The fact is, that some measures adopted by the acting Catholics of Dublin, were so far discordant from the cool discretion of other parts, that they never would have received the decided and unanimous approbation, which the administration of 1793 judged proper

* The Catholics of Ireland never were, and never will be, a people of combined exertion, except under the influence of irritation; the interest of the several classes and localities are so various, that it is only through the medium of their pride that any principle can be established, sufficiently general to support a coalition. I believe there is not on earth a people more averse from political interference, unless it be forced upon them.

It would be a curious investigation to look over the several incidents, which tended to improve the civil condition of the Catholics, each originating in the intemperance of their opponents. The first trace we find of aetivity or exertion in this people was, towards the year 1770. When the commercial towns, in Ireland began to fill, many of the Corporations not satisfied with the other advantages they enjoyed, thought proper, under bye-laws, to exact from the Catholics, as non-freemen, an annual payment called quarterage. The Catholics at first submitted, but gradually came to contest the matter in a course of legal proceedings, and the judgment of the courts of law determined against the exaction. It was afterwards attempted to procure for this tax the sanction of an act of Parliament, and bills for that purpose passed both houses, but were suppressed in the privy council, which enjoyed at the time a legislative jurisdiction. The Catholics, animated by this success, proceeded forward, and so far interested government as to procure the act of 1778 by its influence.

They were again brought to act about 1790, by the indignation excited at a resolution of the magistrates of the county of Armagh, who thought proper, upon occasion of the dissensions between the lower ranks of the Protestants and Catholics of their county, to revive a law for disarming the latter, which since the time of the volunteers was supposed to be obsolete.

Disgust at some proceedings in their own body would again, in the year 1792, have dissolved their cohesion and dispersed them, if they had not been again roused and rallied by the violent denunciations, which I have above referred to.

The spirit, which at this day seems to be in progress, refers to the foolish exclusion of Catholics from many corps of yeomanry, subsequent to Emmett's outrage, and to other matters which certainly were not designed to compliment that body.

proper to gratify, had it not been for the very measures which were played off, in the confidence that the Catholics would thereby be for ever silenced; a considerable part of the country relished so little the idea of a convention, that they never would have countenanced that which met in December 1792, and never would have deputed their delegates to it, if they had not been provoked by the eternal and unqualified negative to any relief, and by the overbearing and indiscriminate censure, expressed in the public acts of the corporation of Dublin, of the county meetings and grand-juries.

Having thus acted hitherto with such very slight knowledge of their own means and of the objects that surrounded them, and having concurred so powerfully to overturn what they most designed to cherish, there is the more reason to apprehend, that the remnant of this party may possibly at the present day not be altogether correct in what they pursue or recommend for their own or for the public interest. Religion, rank, talents, property; these are the impressive influences, by which mankind in general is directed; and I do really believe, that the Irish feel more strongly than almost any other people the awe and impulse of them. We have seen how the greater part of these principles have been wielded by the dominant interests of Ireland. Instead of endeavouring for the common good to extend the character of correct in politics and enlightened in religion, from the upper to the lower Roman Catholics, how much more eagerly intent have they appeared to depress the former to the level of the latter; rather to make bigots of the enlightened, than to liberalize the bigots? Every opportunity was used to suppress the examples of the one state of mind to blazon forth and circulate the pre

cedents

cedents of the other. These pastoral letters, which if they effected nothing else, shewed at least the disposition of the superior, and tended to fix the sentiments of the inferior, clergy among the Catholics; these will never more be repeated with the same promptitude and facility; the exhortations of the prelates have been sent after the agency of the nobles. Good God! will it be believed by those who are not conversant with Ireland, that when called forth by no interest, animated by no incentive, the obscure and humble relacy of the Catholics offered, amidst the difficulties of the state, their all, their names and their influence; a person was found to descend from a situation, which in reverence I forbear to name,* not with applauses for the disinterested mite, for the poor man's generous contribution, but with coarse sneers and unfavourable expositions, with cavils that those who owed nothing had not done enough. The Roman Catholic, who endeavours to shew himself a friend to our constitution, is received, as though to think of approaching the sacred precincts of loyalty were an act of presumptuous intrusion; for him there was no hope of that favourable reception, by which an ingenuous mind is cheered and delighted;—men embarked in the same cause will not admit him; no applause awaits his labours; and approbation, if any, is the very coldest. An inconsiderate word or forced construction is set forth with triumph, and recorded as full conviction of criminality, perhaps of treason. If matter of charge cannot by any means be tortured from his casual oversights; if he has left no room to be accused of attempts, by some distant and far-fetched malice, to counteract his own exertions; no chance

* Letters of a Yeoman.

chance of pickng some little flaw, seeming to imply designs without a purpose, and deceptious that can have no object; then indeed, he may expect to be dismissed into silent and unobserved insignificance. With a party I shall never think of reasoning, but the property of Ireland may be asked, and find it not unprofitable to consider, the propriety of sending every Roman Catholic to seek his level among the discontented, when temper or other circumstances shall dispose his character to ambition or activity. Can it be prudent to set aside the benefit of co-operation, service and example, which may be offered through all the classes of a vast description? And this in the very point where such things are most requisite to soothe and conciliate an agitated people. Now, if in the conduct and views of this body, there exist no circumstance to discriminate them from other subjects, there can be no motive or justification for not affording them an equal degree of latitude and encouragement. And if it really be suspected that a hostile combination amongst them is on foot, nothing can be more palpable, than that it would manifestly tend to break and dishearten that combination, and detach men from it, if the associates of the project perceived an interourse of mutual services and obligation to be established between the state and the members of that communion. As the Roman Catholics are habitually engaged in pursuits of another nature, their body will not offer many candidates for this kind of favour; but the policy, which is put upon our government, repels all the aspiring hopes and ambitious views of an entire people.

But the political delinquencies of the Catholics!—They have held a convention; some used intemperate language;—there has been a rebellion in which many

of

of them participated. To take up these topics with minuteness, would precisely be to rehearse the crowded facts of our history, during a period the most momentous and replete with events. But who are those who read the lessons of moderation? Are they the men, who in 1782 cavilled with England about idle rights, and proceeded to the very extreme verge of open violence? Are they the men, who, in the pursuit of parliamentary reform, sat in rival pomp over against the settled authorities of the constitution? Which, I beg to know, is the more criminal act, to be intemperate for some thing, or for nothing? The Roman Catholics sought what was rational and just, and what was beneficial to themselves and to the country; they held one Convention in the course of this pursuit; but the circumstances of the occasion had compelled them to adopt that measure; their fellow-subjects, however, were beforehand with them; not content with a vast latitude of political privilege, they would form the constitution on a more democratic model; and whilst they followed a fancy calculated to bring ruin upon themselves and upon their country, they celebrated about a dozen of those reprehensible assemblies.* Some very weak and some very inflammatory harangues were uttered while

 the

* When I came to make the observations of an adult upon the state of Ireland, (about the beginning of Lord Westmoreland's administration,) the man, who, out of the circle of Parliament, should assert, that a very free reform of the House of Commons ought not to take place, or that the government of Ireland was conducted with any other design than public injury and private advantage, would have been regarded as a sycophant or a madman. The Catholics at this time did not concern themselves with politics, but when put to them in private society, they acquiesced in what no person contradicted. Is it extraordinary that a warmth so very prevalent, should at length have extended; and ought those to be strenuous in accusing, who afforded the example?

the franchises of the Catholics were under consideration; but is this vice or folly, which ever you please to call it, rebuked by the meekness of almost contemporary proceedings? Have we lost the records of all these famous resolves, by which England was menaced during the rage for independence? Are not the declamations on reform, during the Rutland administration, still ringing in our ears? By whom were Mr. Paine's Rights of Man * sent among the peasantry of Ireland? It is necessary to recall persons a little to their reason, who so far forget themselves as to suppose, that wild conceits are innocent, if followed by themselves; whilst other men are never to wash out the stain of eagerness, perhaps at times indiscretion, in a pursuit, which none can censure without with-holding their applause from the British forms and Constitution. I must offer this retort when I find reproaches made on the head of want of moderation. If little, scarcely any thing, has been done, to give a lead to moderate men; if such have been sternly repelled, and obliged to fall back into the ranks of an opposite description; if no step has been taken to determine that popular feeling, which ever fluctuates between right and wrong; which in concerns of a political nature is generally influenced by parties, by leaders, and by passions; if, whilst the alleged friends of order acted, as though no such thing existed among the Catholics as a public mind, the enemies of the empire, more sagacious,

* This distribution was made by the care and procurement of a society called the Whigs of the Capital, formed out of the corporations in Dublin, and pretty much of the same description, who, under different leaders, have since constituted the Orange Clubs of this city.

I have seen a whimsical note, taken by a gentleman, of the various fate of a small political society to which he belonged some years ago, when such things were very much the fashion.—The members were nearly in equal proportions promoted in the state, or punished for treason.

sagacious, applied themselves to cultivate and cajole it *. If these facts be justly stated, which is the matter of surprize, that many of this people were misled, or that a great and valuable portion should have adhered with steady and undeviating zeal to the Crown, the Constitution, and the Country?

The rebellion which broke out in Ireland in 1798, is to be ascribed to the Roman Catholic Religion, precisely in the same manner that the revolt in North America, or the conflagration of London in 1780, were Protestant; or as the insurrection in Rome against the Pope, or the massacre of the Bishops and Priests in the prisons of Paris were Roman Catholic; that is, many agents in these several acts had received the first mark of christianity under the auspices of either religion. This, I apprehend, proves little to the point. Rebellion will, in Ireland, be popish; just as will sheep-stealing; the one is the vice of the most inflammable, the other of the most necessitous part of the community; and whilst these

* I never was of opinion, that eminent talents were displayed by the conspirators of 1798; they were babbling gownsmen, who amused themselves in talking, and in the fancy of their greatness, where others in the same predicament would have acted daringly; but the inferior emissaries displayed infinite address, vigilance, and dexterity; they possessed themselves of all the avenues to the feelings and passions of the populace; in their circuits about the country, they were indefatigable—I observed amongst many other things, that they gained almost every common piper in the kingdom, and put seditious words to every favourite air. All this time the Gentry of the country were staring about them, wondering at the progress of revolt, or favouring it by mismanagement.

After the discomfiture of the rebellion, a person, who took a very active lead in it, was concealed until he escaped from the country. I afterwards learned from those, who had seen him, that when the conversation turned on the pacificatory measures pursued under Lord Cornwallis, he repeatedly exclaimed—"D——n his lenity, he ruined us."

parts continue to be Catholic, the religion necessarily will embrace the incidental defects of the situation. I might admit the religious feelings to be in fault, if any religious design or object could be detected; I believe no man will challenge for the Roman Catholic, or any other discipline, that it is competent to counteract every moral depravity that arises from false policy and maxims; I am sure I should not venture upon that assertion, under the circumstances I have described in Ireland; but it is indeed a curious form of logic, that false policy and erroneous maxims are never to be redressed, because indeed they, as might well be imagined, produced their effect by exciting a promptitude to insurrection.

In matters so remote as politics, I have no conception that a numerous people are any thing but what they are formed to by the influences that are placed over them; when, therefore, I admit some faults to have occurred among the Roman Catholics, I directly impute the blame to the Protestant public, who presented a bad example both in their controversies with the crown for an extent of powers, and with England for independence; and to the Protestant aristocracy, who subverted the sound and salutary influences, and substituted another, in the persons of men, some of whom have since displayed their ultimate design, and others have at least appeared to want discrimination and capacity. The Catholics, who were nearest to the government, were those who could be fully relied on; their habits of association must have given them an identity of views with every other aristocracy, or rendered them at least easily susceptible of these impressions. I think popular humours at one time prevailed among the Catholics, which were rather to be accounted for than justified. I am not about to become the apologist of any deviation from the course

that

that reason designates; but when we come to treat of recent discontents and feelings, we cannot but observe, that those have been most severely censured, who can allege the most powerful exculpation; with respect to this people, the ordinary resources of superior situation have been very, very sparingly employed; the ordinary springs of human conduct have not by any means been set in motion. When has wisdom been conspicuous in the collective character of men, if great masses are impelled to act, and left without a guide to direct or consolidate their proceedings? Things with us have run very much in the course that might have been expected. If I unbar my door to the midnight wanderer, I shall be robbed; — I do not extenuate the guilt, or approve a laxity of principle, when I say, that I provoked my misfortune. Take the controversy with those, who proclaim the necessity of universal exclusion, on the ground of the very worst apprehension that can be thought of. Certain advantages are with-held from men of rank and aspiring pretensions, because they are disinclined to the ecclesiastical establishment. But suppose any man of that description were sufficiently profligate and perverse to concert the injury of that establishment, would he proceed within the circle of his privileges? If he did so, he probably should stand alone; yet more probably he would render himself the subject of derision. The means to be employed, by a man entertaining these views, would be force and seduction; now as to these means, the system of incapacities, to which you resort, tends only to whet, prepare the way for, and facilitate the application of them A man of high pretensions, in the undisturbed enjoyment of all his legal rights and advantages, would be totally severed from sympathy with popular discontent;

but

but if he be placed under restrictions, he may excite the commiseration of the people, and ingratiate himself, by shewing how much he is a loser when he makes common cause with them. Then, if the provision mean any thing, it looks to security; and where you propose to be perfectly and accurately safe, the condition in which you place yourselves is that of the most imminent and manifest hazard. I conceive the case to stand thus: Either the Roman Catholics are, or they are not, to be preserved in the shape of an interest or corporation distinct from their fellow-subjects; if the affirmative be adopted, the principles of rank, property, and education, should be resorted to and upheld, in order to attract the sympathies and habits of the people, and form a basis of attachment; if you decide for the negative, the distinctive laws are the mark and line of separation, and they should be abrogated, in order to blend the nations, who have hitherto been kept apart, and to identify this with the other descriptions of the community.

The professed and ostensible purport of the relaxing statute of 1793 was to impart to the Catholics the franchises of the constitution, from the rank of private gentlemen downwards. Perhaps circumstances at the time afforded a colour of expediency for stopping at that point; less would not have satisfied the sober and sound desire that prevailed, or laid the foundation for the feelings that were expected. The measure would have been better received, if the aristocracy of parliament had more accurately studied their ground, and yielded to pressing exigencies with better grace and temper; the fruits would have been more abundant, if there had been a more judicious application of the merit and credit of the concession; the fluctuation of resolves and systems had so much impaired the reputation of govern-

ment,

ment, that many persons, considering the best security for the public weal to consist in the efficiency of the supreme authority, and the respect in which it maintained itself, were not sorry to observe in the state, vigour and power sufficient to assert its dignity, by prescribing the measure of surrender to popular requisition; and they acquiesced on this ground, in a limitation, which they could not have approved upon any other policy. If motives of collateral convenience rendered some reserve expedient, it was more judicious to let the burden fall, where it would be most lightly felt, and where a more cultivated reflection would convert a temporary privation into patriotic sacrifice; such, perhaps, were the feelings on the subject of the act of 1793. We must proceed to the actual application, at the present day, of the rule adopted upon that occasion, and its propriety and reasonableness as the foundation of a political system. In the inferior classes of society, the Roman Catholics are numerous, and symptoms of insubordination have appeared in these quarters; yet there, every privilege is conceded; whilst penalties are imposed upon persons, who employ the utmost effort of precept and example to support the state, and to keep the people steady to their duty. If the Roman Catholics were dangerous, you should guard against them where they are powerful; and, if exclusion from privilege afforded protection, it is here the state should curtail its grant of franchises; but on this side nothing can be more free; the Catholics enjoy, as in good sense and justice they ought, every latitude of privilege; I do not impeach (God forbid I should!) this equitable latitude; but when persons talk of the Roman Catholic body as dangerous to the establishment, and practically assert their principles by removing

restrictions

restrictions from the many and imposing them on the few; when they emancipate the multitude, who may, perhaps, be deluded, and who are capable of rash proceedings; and discharge their whole rigour upon a couple of dozen gentlemen, whose fidelity is counter-secured by their situation, and whom no man can reasonably suspect of differing from their equals; then, indeed, I am compelled to impeach the abettors of this project, and to produce against them this palpable evidence of inconsistency. Can any man say, that the collective mass, they denominate Popery, is formidable to any branch of our constitution, when no fears are entertained from that quarter, where its adherents are easy to be influenced and numerous; but all the vigilance of coercion is directed against the few, whose fortune, rank, and habits of thought are pledges and security for good conduct? *Laudatur et alget* is emphatically the motto of a Roman Catholic gentleman in Ireland. Every body commends, and none, in the play of parties, seem disposed practically to assist him.

For what objects is security sought by this course of proceeding?—The State: why should a Roman Catholic be averse from the State, if the State do not molest him? To what Court, or Prince, or form of Government can he turn his eyes? To France, the common pillager and proud tyrant of its vassal allies? Where on earth will he find so much beneficence of law as at home, so much clemency of administration? Men must be driven forcibly from the ways of reason, when they combine to any extent against our Sovereign and Constitution. Is it meant to consult the safety of the Church? The ecclesiastical establishment is as well fenced by law and by power, by opinion, and interest, as any institution that ever existed. To my observation, the establishment

of

of the church in Ireland does not present a single point that betrays weakness, save only when it seems to make common cause with the crazy and defenceless system of coercion. If the church adopt this alliance, it may possibly invite the speculating opponents of the one to extend their indisposition to the other. Thus at present stands the church; it enjoys an undisputed property, and advantages, which do not interfere with any party or opinion; a further requisition is demanded, that about three-fourths of the people should be placed under restraints, in order to make security more secure, and to sanction what is undisturbed and undisputed. Now this appears to me to be supplying a motive and stirring up an interest against the church, instead of affording it strength and protection. I who am a Roman Catholic; who live amongst that people; who pique myself on entering into their feelings; and who have no reason to claim an exemption from their prejudices; even I pronounce, that the legislature would grossly abuse its duties and its trusts, if it could be supposed capable of suppressing or altering the establishment. I have already, in the course of this work *, expressed my opinion, that, in the actual state of property and manners, the existing distribution is the more suitable; and as to leaving the care of religion to the good sense of mankind, without superintendence of provision on behalf of the public, it is of too much import to the happiness of society, to be committed to our short-sighted and capricious improvidence. Every person knows the value of health, and the extent to which it is necesary to attend to small concerns, in order to preserve that valuable enjoyment; yet the wisest

* See pages 27, 28, 38, 39, 40.

of us every day squander those means, which depend upon our prudence and attention. I should as soon think of relying on the discretion of a ship's company for the degree of cleanliness necessary to exclude contagious disease, as trust to the unassisted wisdom of mankind for upholding religion, the point from which civilization and morals commence, and where they terminate. I do not concur in opinion with the Archbishop of Dublin; but in the mitred credit and parliamentary honours of that Prelate, I can perceive a lustre shed upon the general cause of religion, and an augmentation of reverence and esteem to every, even the humblest pastor of every church or congregation in the kingdom. So long as Parliament shall continue to extend its protection to the church, which I presume at all times will be the case; so long as it guards that respectable fabrick from the occasional indifference of its own members; it cannot, in the entire range of possibility, be affected by the favours, which have been conferred, or by those, which hereafter may be extended to the Roman Catholics. The law of the land has been at all times superior to every party in this country; it was at all times sufficient to protect the establishment;—by the Union it has acquired new vigour; and thus reinforced, it becomes efficient beyond doubt, dispute, or question. The establishment at this day can have no occasion to lean for support upon this scheme of partiality; its real safe-guard is the balance of property together with that of power, which issues from the former legitimately and fairly. When any man can shew me an inclination to depart from this order of things, or a probability that this preponderance will be subverted; then shall I enter with him upon the propriety of devising fresh means of support, or of accommodating

the

the new and unforeseen contingency. As the Popery system stands at present in Ireland, it is incompetent for any purposes, except those of unnecessarily dividing the people, and dangerously irritating them; by infusing arrogance into the one party, and discontent into the other, it renders both unfit for civil duties. These are something more, and those something less, than subjects should be under a well-tempered government. If I were desirous to see a Roman Catholic party or interest preserved and cherished in opposition to the general welfare, I should wish the excluding laws to subsist, as the only mode by which this entire people can be combined and rallied. Let us take the supposition of a Catholic interest predominating in any county or borough; if the persons who compose this interest be admitted to competition, they will naturally divide among themselves; if excluded, they will act as a compact body, and decide the return of members, whom they will influence.

Another point of view yet remains, in which this matter may deserve to be continued with still greater seriousness. A considerable degree of opulence is forming among the Roman Catholics.—The men of this day are engaged in the pursuit of wealth, but those of twenty years hence will be formed with the views and under the impressions of actual enjoyment. Will they be exempt from ambition in a state of society, and under a form of government particularly favourable to the growth and to the unfolding of that feeling? That you can check the career of these men's minds, is what I believe no person will venture to assert; and if you do not afford them objects of patriotic and legitimate pursuit, they will certainly employ themselves in a contrary direction; if they do not come to be connected with the state, they will connect themselves with the enemy. It will not then be

as in the contests of the 17th century, (when the continental powers were otherwise engaged,) a question between the discontents of Ireland and the undiminished power and energy of England; that power will no longer be left at leisure; these discontents will be more efficaciously pointed, backed with greater vigour, and administered with more sagacity. Who can look without horror and dismay, upon that which possibly may prove the grave of the British Empire? Who can see, without indignant feelings, the light and inconsiderate trifles which dispose to that catastrophe. I do not put these matters as a Roman Catholic; there are various points of inconvenience which I should press, if I presented myself at this day as the advocate of that people. My remarks in this tract are directed to matters of general concern and imperial legislation. I shall reserve myself upon particular topics, to another occasion; if indeed any occasion can require again to revive arguments illustrated by that superior intelligence*, whose operations rather resembled the supernatural aid of inspiration, than human intellect or agency. I am the friend of the state, the cordial and enthusiastic lover of the British Empire. I offer these heads of observation, in which the state alone is concerned, and which any man who regards his country, or desires its settlement, even although he should unfortunately labour under the infirmity of disinclination to this part of his fellow-subjects, must yet feel himself to be interested. Persisting in the incapacities upon Catholics, government will come to be so much occupied with the care of keeping back this question, and preserving the public from being agitated by it, that the Protestants will be rendered completely cyphers. No other political discussion

discussion of moment remains, since the Union, to engage the attention of Ireland; the Catholics, exercised continually by this, will become the centre of all activity, and will engross, or be rendered, the sole public mind of the country.

Entertaining these views; and feeling what, if not already ascertained, is I think fully demonstrable, that the abolition of the incapacitating laws is the concern of the country, in the most extended import of that appellation; that, far from promoting sectarian interests, it would rather tend to counteract and to impede them; feeling that, if personal motives came to be weighed, those, who do not stand well with the Catholics, would have more occasion to rejoice in the completion of the measure than their friends and favourites. With these thoughts present to my mind, and regarding the matter under these aspects, wherefore, it will be demanded, do I strenuously urge and desire this abrogation? Because my attachment to the Catholics is not as to an independent state or distinct people, but a part of the great community of my country; because I do not merge the patriot in the Catholic; because my mind rises from subordinate partialities to the welfare and honour of the most respectable Empire that has yet flourished upon earth; to the Crown by which that Empire is splendidly represented; to the civilized world, in whose cause and for whose conservation at this moment it is gloriously contending. I wish to see the people of Ireland rescued from the hands, and placed beyond the gripe, of arrogant and ignorant pretenders. I wish that no pretext should exist to diminish the energies of the state, by confusing the duties, and distracting the affections of the subject; pointing to the minor cares and considerations of a separate description, when the great good,

and

and common cause of all challenge the utmost effort of vigour and exertion. How long shall such a cause and such a people remain, as a sort of *bonum derelictum*, which any man may occupy, and convert to purposes often vile and seldom warrantable? I do not hesitate to avow inferior considerations which bring with them a proportionable degree of value. It would be desirable that every man were sent to seek his own level in society, without assistance from the specious assumption of zeal, which generally is empty, still more generally unwise, and which may so easily be counterfeited. Who that respects public tranquillity and decorum, will not look for relief from the bustling foolery of mock consequence, to the extinction of that excuse, which gives it some degree of currency? When shall the friends of the established religion be brought to understand, that a preparatory academy for jacobinism, in the heart of the metropolis, is of more dangerous import to their favourite object, than the admission to Parliament of a few gentlemen, (probably not five at the present day, and not twenty at any one time for half a century) who must be too strongly impressed with the principles of property, to bring to their elevation a mind hostile to the civil rights of the church, and who, if they did bear that mind, could produce no effect, overpowered so immensely by a different temper? Let me not be understood to imply, that recent proceedings, to which I may be supposed to allude, are actuated or managed by any design, or to any purpose of sedition. I contemplate the effect upon a populous town, of a discussion, which applies more to feelings of men than to their interests, and which floats indiscriminately through all ranks and classes; I contemplate the enthusiasm that will be excited; yet more obstinate than enthusiasm, the self-sufficiency that will arise; the

habits

habits of political intrigue and combination upon matters of remote concern. When these shall have advanced to a certain consistency, the concession will come too late for the repose of the country; concession only serves to inflate and stimulate, but never has appeased, officious vanity. It is not easy to reduce persons to the limited cares and agency of private affairs, who have been taught to regard themselves important and formidable to their rulers. As an Irishman, I should prefer the existence of the restraining laws, rather than seek relief from them as a Catholic, by the means of popular activity and enthusiasm.

Catholic claim, in fact or in expression, is at this day, revolting to my sense of duties and relations, and conveys an idea in no wise commensurate to the object; it seems to circumscribe one of the most comprehensive concerns of the British state, as though it appertained alone to the members of one class, and depended solely upon their exertions; it reduces to the semblance of a party question, that which is the cause and interest of Ireland. Catholic claim—as well might the settlement of Canada be called a Catholic claim, or as well the revival in any province throughout France of its accustomed habits. The first impression would, in either instance, be made upon persons of that religion, and the effect through them be transmitted to society. If properly understood and judiciously conducted, it is the claim and cause of Ireland; it is the cherishing legitimate hopes; the extinction of intruding pretensions; it is the dignity of rank and equilibrium of property. What man embarked in the welfare of Ireland, and bound to it by the ties of fortune or establishment, can calmly look on, and imagine himself unconcerned in the final disposal of this extensive head of obligation and interest? Can you

behold

behold a vast accumulation of wealth and influence cast aside for the purpose, and set to form the matter of future discontent? It may probably be laid down as an invariable rule in politics, that nothing ought to be preserved, which cannot be justified to the subject, or which is not worth the trouble of enforcing; the first supplies the basis for a dominion of opinion; the second for that of force; neither stand the application in the instance before us. Our constitution of government confers privileges, which are constructed for popular use, and of which the tenure is popular enjoyment; certain of these advantages, it is said, are not with propriety to be communicated to the Catholics; the argument goes to the abolition of such institutions. The Catholics are too much the people to be thus set apart from what appertains to that description. It is a preposterous solecism to speak of popular franchises, without popular participation. If unfortunately there existed a necessity to resort to that expedient, the proper mode of meeting the situation would be to simplify the monarchy.—*Deposit with the crown whatever does not suit the people.* "The Catholics are not fit for such and such things;" *a fortiori*, such things ought not to be held in their name and to their exclusion. I do not accede to the arguments by which the exclusion is attempted to be sustained; but what I have stated is the corollary in which they terminate. If the supporters of the doctrine be right, the franchises ought to be suppressed; if wrong, the principle ought to be abandoned.

But powerfully confirmed and rooted in expediency and in policy; waving not a tittle of prudent and political right; if required to abandon the strong and elevated ground, on which I am placed, and to enter upon the busy scene of political activity, I would pause to survey

my

my motives and my means, and to apportion to both my exertions. I would consider, whether the movements suggested to me, however satisfactory and flattering to my private views, were adapted to the relative circumstances and situation of the people, whom I presumed to personate. I would not be ready, at the summons of every, or of any rash, speculatist*, to engage where the body, with whom I am connected, never can be more than an humble and not an honoured instrument. In their own sphere of action, political parties are respectable and useful, but it never can answer a salutary purpose to annex to any such the Roman Catholics of Ireland; *hitherto they never came in contact with a political party, but to their misfortune.* As little suitable to political parties is the alliance of a people, too widely extended, and too much diversified, to be easily or safely moved or managed. Far be it from me to advise that my countrymen should with-hold their approbation, their gratitude, some of their best and warmest affections, from the guides and luminaries of the state, who have discerned the intimate connexion subsisting in their case between patriotism and justice; but if urged by the surrender of their own respect to bid for that of any persons whatsoever, I answer, No—Let parties come to Ireland, never let Ireland supplicate at the knee of party—maintain your own ground, and you will become the umpire of political controversies.

Pursuing the same train of candid deliberation; resisting the impulse of vanity, which here is more seductive than avarice; refusing to become the tool, and as he necessarily must be, the low and subservient tool

 of

* *Inquiry into the causes of discontent in Ireland*; a tract in which considerable talent is displayed, with the greatest possible neglect of information.

of other men's ambition, the reflecting Roman Catholic would still proceed; those, for whom he engages, possess at this day, and exercise, with advantage to themselves and to the country, vast and splendid privileges; he would not insulate himself within his own little subdivision of society; he would call to mind the feelings, which he ought to entertain, as a man, a subject, and a citizen; he would not assume, as a standard of gratitude, that rule, which is only to be approved when it is a spur to exertion, and a corrective of indolence *; he would revolve deeply and seriously in his thoughts those circumstances, connected with his cause, which seem to give to dignified forbearance a preference above assertion, and to recompence the suspension of pride by the grace and lustre derived from the exalted principle that prompts him to restrain it; he would be the more inclined to adopt that course of forbearance, if it were a compliment to feelings, which he must revere, and to interests, which he never can cease to value; if it were a pious tribute of affection and duty to a benignant monarch; if with reference to the delicacy of the conjuncture, and to the irritation of the public mind when this subject happens to be discussed, the conduct would appear considerate; and if he were not called to depart from it by any new and pressing exigency. The example and converse of our fellow-subjects have taught us indignantly to repel their assumption of dominion; yet were the burden more intolerable, were the means of redemption less ambiguous, we should make of them an unreserved and voluntary oblation at the feet of a paternal sovereign, by the bounties and blessings of whose reign we are surrounded; this is not humiliation, it is sentiment,

* *Nil actum reputans si quid superesset agendum.*

ment, and converts the chain with which I am aggrieved, into a badge of loyalty and honour. Not a man on earth, who feels a congenial impulse, and is alive to the merit of generous sensibility, will with-hold his suffrage, his esteem, his cordial co-operation from a people, whom that consideration influences to that sacrifice. Were I to proceed on the coldest calculations of prudence, they would bear out the propriety of my counsel; but prudence is the virtue of other moments and situations; a people should not calculate, but act upon its own ardent and disinterested impulse. Loyalty is the expansion of filial reverence, and who will refuse to the doubts and difficulties of his Prince, the kind consideration he would cheerfully offer to his parent? You are the descendants of men, who formed a mercenary army, that from their scanty pay they might contribute to the subsistence of their exiled sovereign; nation of gallant hearts and refined sympathies, it is not in your name or on your behalf, that a thorn should be planted in that Crown, which for above forty years has been worn for your advantage!

I have been led to this point of remark, delicate indeed, but interesting, which it is impossible to overlook, and difficult to proceed on; yet there is a sort of affected preciseness in not noticing, what is in the mind and on the lips of every individual, that, after a series of concessions, which conspicuously denote the benignant inclination of the royal mind, doubts have arisen as to the yet unconceded privileges, tending to no small degree of perplexity between the difficulty of assent and the ungraciousness of refusal. When we direct our views to the protective influence under which the people during nearly half a century has been sheltered and cherished, to the prosperity which is the growth of that period,

and almost the donation of that influence, it becomes impossible to mistake the mind, to which these things are ascribable. The same inclination of feeling must have gone on to conduct the corrective system to its completion, if the benignant course had not been interrupted by what is easy to be removed, and has palpably been resorted to. At our very doors misrepresentations have been made, and a false colouring given to the unfortunate incidents that have occurred in this country; it can scarcely be supposed, that a like imposition should not have been attempted, where it was more important; this probable presumption, and this alone, can account for an alteration of opinion, as to the advantages which are least important, whilst those of infinitely higher moment, both with respect to their applicability, and the degree of power they confer, had been generously and unhesitatingly imparted. Favoured by distance of rank, and remoteness of situation, from the scene of action, favoured yet more by the misconduct of persons, who through intrigue or even through the fault of Government, became a sort of temporary leaders, and whose acts, a party in Ireland has never ceased assiduously to press and to exaggerate; we cannot be astonished that success to a certain degree attended the design. Patriotism will deplore the result, but candour cannot regard it with astonishment.

If political influence on behalf of the Catholics is inconsiderable; if opinion be their sole resource; if that opinion be not arrived at maturity, or rather if it has sustained a check, even where weight and example are most momentous, I should hesitate to invoke a decision upon garbled and imperfect evidence, which has not yet been fairly and powerfully contradicted; a decision, which to this country will be a signal for virulent animosities;

sities; which would be received by one party as a defeat, by another as a triumph; which would render the inconsiderate on this hand more harsh and overbearing, and alienate the same description of their opponents in a crisis of danger and difficulty from the public interest. If I approach the doubts and delicacy of my King with reverence, so do I look with compassion on the infirmities of my country; I cannot see the propriety of agitating this matter by the means, which recently have been set on foot; the machinery employed exceeds the value of the object.

These are the sentiments of a private and unauthorized individual, who does not desire to implicate any other person, and who claims for his opinion no pretension of higher authority than what is derived from reason and from feeling. To insinuate a merit, or assert a singularity in sentiments, which, as they ought to exist, doubtless will be found to prevail very extensively, would be unjust and uncandid. What I express, is not the absence of feeling, but a temperate reserve under a full sense of inconvenience; not passiveness, not phlegmatic apathy; but a calm, and I trust, not dishonourable moderation. I hope to have evinced, that I am sufficiently alive to the civil and political situation of a Catholic. I bear my part in the taunts and contumelies that arise out of the discountenancing system, and perhaps am not without a share in its privations. If my equals suffer, I do not address them from a bed of roses. But feelings, which I should blush not to entertain, have neither so far transported nor confused me, that I should misapprehend my means and my grievances. The Popery laws, as they exist at present, constitute an inconvenience, a strong and pointed inconvenience to certain persons; few in fact, but these few, the very men, who least deserve

to

to suff r ; when I come to treat of the propriety of an alteration of policy in this respect, I represent, that the matter is not of the slightest moment by way of safeguard or superiority, for both are more effectually and less invidiously secured in the distribution of property, and the Protestants, by a handsome concession, would confer that, which would be received as a compliment of kind condescension to the opinions or prejudices of a great and respectable portion of their countrymen ; I urge as motives of yet superior force, that a great and growing interest ought to be intimately bound and connected with the state, and the rising generation directed to constitutional pursuits and attachments ; I really could not keep my countenance, if I met any man willing to believe, that the peasantry of Ireland were ready to fly into rebellion, because half a dozen, or half a score of gentlemen, who do not themselves appear to take up the matter very urgently, are debarred from the possible contingency of a seat in Parliament. Without doubt there are parts of the Popery system, which extend their indirect consequences very widely in society ; yet with an act of Parliament in our hands, admitting Catholics to every legal capacity they can imagine, these consequences would not be affected, unless that people be able to conciliate the adverse mind, and by the example, or through the energy of Government, to repress its sallies or compose them. I rest with the greater earnestness upon this important, but I fear, unobserved, distinction between the pride and solid interest of the Roman Catholics, from the recollection of two memorable occasions, in which the difference appears to have been overlooked essentially to their detriment. Earl Fitzwilliam seems to have miscarried in his project of improvement, by beginning at the wrong end, and complicating

his

his objects. It is not easy for those to judge, who stand at a distance from information and occurrences; but if great statesmen, who withdrew from office in 1801, had found it compatible to remain, by infusing their mind into the administration of Ireland, we should amply be compensated for the delay of their intended regulations. Without question, the policy and justice of the Catholic cause have been highly complimented; but we have paid for that compliment a ransom beyond its value, if it cost the exclusion from his Majesty's cabinet of Lords Spencer, Grenville and Mr. Windham.

Our want in Ireland is peace rather than privilege; our grievance is not so much, that restraining statutes are on the records of parliament, as that the existing laws are inoperative; our privileges cover with tolerable accuracy our situation, if we were permitted to enjoy them without disturbance. The manners of the country militate against its harmony; acts of parliament cannot reach these manners, but the presiding and directing mind of the administrative power may; it is therefore not to Parliament, but to the executive authority, we must look for the settlement of Ireland. Applying itself with vigilance and energy, our government may compose our dissensions, and impart to every man the satisfactory enjoyment of a flourishing country and happy constitution. I will shortly bring under review the actual state of the restrictive statutes, in order more precisely to ascertain the questions, what we have to expect, and where to place our dependence. The incapacities affecting the Roman Catholics, as they exist in name and letter, may be reduced under these heads:—Parliament and the great offices of state; the legal and military professions; the corporations; certain contradictions or omissions, in the several acts intended for the relief of Roman Catholics,

lics, by which the affairs of private life are affected. The act of 1793 was designed to apply a general remedy to all the wants and inconveniencies of the middle situation; but such was the intemperance, such the vanity, and such the incapacity of the persons, who assumed on the part of the Catholics*, the management of that transaction, that it passed in a form incongruous and incomplete, and several of its provisions are utterly repugnant to each other; some of these provisions are contrary to common right, and all have so very little colour in policy, that if passions were suffered to subside, and the matter came to be calmly explained and investigated, a bill to remove doubts, and amend the act of 1793, could not possibly admit of a week's delay or refusal.

The corporations are placed on the footing of the reign of Charles II. that is a Roman Catholic may become free of any corporation, and vote for magistrates and members of parliament; if elected to a corporate office, he may exercise it, by the special permission of the Lord Lieutenant.

A Roman Catholic Barrister may not hold the offices of King's Council, Attorney or Solicitor General; but he may receive from the Crown, a patent of precedence, which confers all the advantages of the nominal office of King's Counsel. The law offices have, in consequence of the Union, ceased to be the most lucrative situations at the bar, and he is eligible to those, which have retained their emoluments. The Bench is certainly a strict and unmitigated exclusion. The military profession lies under

* The minister of that day, an English gentleman, could not possibly be conversant with the details of a subject, which was perfectly novel to him; the Irish branch of administration either opposed, or reluctantly assented to, the measure; the heads of opposition, as they did not originate the matter, were not interested to render it perfect.

under some difficulties, on account of the difference between the laws in England and in Ireland; but here again, temper would be found the best corrective; the necessities of the service and of the Empire would very soon either produce a change in the letter of the law, or render it, as has occurred in the case of the Scotch Presbyterians, altogether obsolete; the statute law in England is equally strict against these, but no person thinks of enforcing it.

There is not any set-off against the exclusion from Parliament, and from a few enumerated offices of state; but we have had already occasion to observe, that the former, in the actual condition of property, is not a grievance of very comprehensive extent, and the enumerated great offices either have fallen, or are likely to fall, into disuse by the Union. I apprehend that, what is most felt as an inconvenience, is a matter collateral to the Popery laws, and almost accidental. Roman Catholics may not vote at vestries on questions relating to the repairs of the church or to divine service. In some parts where there are but four or five Protestants in the parish, this law gives them a power of taxation, very capable of abuse, and with respect to which abuses have been complained of; this circumstance might easily be regulated, and it is not to be supposed, in any ordinary calmness of the public mind, that regulation would be resisted.

This system and state of things, this remnant of ancient prejudices unfortunately revived in our days with uncommon heat and exasperation, forms a strong case for amicable adjustment, but is not fitting, nor of sufficient magnitude, for an angry controversy; those amongst us, who have the ambition to become leaders—those, who desire to display talents at the public expence, may find a gratification in protracting the contentious spirit. In

the assertion of their character, the Roman Catholics of Ireland have a very deep and serious interest; this concern is however, very much overlooked, and the people are endeavoured to be set upon political pursuits, by the success of which they have very little to gain, whilst all the miseries of national animosity are to be perpetuated by the failure.

The cause in Ireland of popular uneasiness, the discontent which really pricks to soreness in one class, and to desperation in another, arises not from the letter of the law, but from the practice and manners of the country. Whatever may be the situation, whatever the pretensions of a Roman Catholic, there is a general disposition to depress him as far as possible below his level. This struggle against the course of things, and against natural feelings is resented; it frequently assumes the shape of discontent; it more commonly tends to produce neutrality. The lowest class of the people conceive, that the listlessness or the indifference of persons of property is an encouragement to enterprizes of innovation. The soundest inclination to order and harmony would be found, if they were permitted to exert it, among the propertied Roman Catholics; but whilst they are kept in the back-ground, and reduced to neutrality, the most effectual and powerful restraint is removed from the light and irritable populace. There would be no combination among this latter class, if they discerned a strong spirit of resistance among the farmers; and there could be no combination, if the spirit of the farmers were directed and raised, and if they were on the alert to discover such movements and repress them. This is a short outline of the real cause of disturbance in Ireland; combined with another circumstance—the want of an outlet to the adventurous mind of the country, it will account altogether for, and point to the occasion of, the facility, with which the population

pulation is directed against government and property. The most secure and settled parts of Ireland are those, in which the Roman Catholic religion is most universally followed, and where the predominant inclination to that religion among the upper classes is such, that the middle are permitted to act in their own sphere, and the lowest remain in undisturbed subordination. Witness the county of Galway, where the superior property is in the hands either of Roman Catholics, or of persons of that connexion and interest.

Matters not within the letter of any law, tacit and virtual exclusions are more painful than what Parliament authorizes. Let us suppose Parliament to take effectual steps, and place things on the footing of sober, sound, and equal legislation; the bearings of power would not be altered by that proceeding; the whole scope of authority might be under an opposite bias; the people are still liable to be influenced by the ebullition of spleen and peevishness. The settlement of the country would not take effect, and its enemies would loudly accuse what they would call ingratitude, and what they would reproach as evidence of immutable hostility, in men, whom all the condescensions and munificence of the legislature do not pacify. Never was I more strongly impressed with any opinion, than that a legislative concession to the Catholics, unaccompanied by such circumstances as shall render it the ground-work of harmony and settlement, would rather be an injury than an advantage; and there is not any thing which I more sincerely deprecate than such concession, left, as was the last, to be enforced by accident. *Unless the repeal of the restrictive laws be a peace-offering, it is not worth the acceptance. It is a matter of small moment for the Catholics to receive, but which would be gracious, wholesome, and conciliatory in the Protestants to offer.* I

wish the concession to take effect; for the sake of the country anxiously and earnestly do I wish it; but then I wish it with a due contingency of advantage; not as the triumph of Catholic over Protestant; but as a propitiation and atonement; as a regulation of state, and a token of cordiality.

If required to state from whence this happy change of temper is to be expected, I reply, that calmness and patience may, and probably will produce that consequence; but it certainly will not arise under the revival of ancient heat, and the ungovernable impetuosity of popular proceedings. Where the prejudices that prevail in Ireland are not the effect of honest misapprehension, easily accessible to reason, intercourse and example, they are a sort of out-work for the monopoly of patronage; so soon as it comes to be fully understood, that the monopoly is hopeless, and that service and merit, whenever they occur, are likely to meet the encouragement that is due to them—antipathies, no longer profitable, will subside, and the settlement of the country will encounter little difficulty or obstruction. A country gentleman has not influence over a petty constable; a citizen of Dublin cannot procure (although the law admits of it) the freedom of the corporation; a Barrister has never attained an office so elevated as Commissioner of Bankrupts; and you propose to relieve the feelings of these several descriptions, and to repair the deficiency, by rendering the latter legally capable to be promoted to the Bench, and the others to represent places in Parliament, where they seem almost to exist by sufferance. Passions and prejudices are the national evil and calamity; the removal of the restrictive laws is a benefit so limited, as almost to be a private concern; we may talk of our personal advantage, but surely not of the improvement of Ireland,

under

under a nominal extension of capabilities leaving the root of the evil untouched, and passions and prejudices where it found them; on this view of our condition and necessities, I would apply myself to the Government; I would apply myself to the country; the one and the other will be reprehensible if they neglect the means of producing reconciliation, and establishing a permanent basis of harmony; but should these bodies unfortunately overlook their duty, it is not for us to embark in a rivalship of error. On the ground of reason, the relief of the Roman Catholics is irresistible; the only objections, that have as yet been offered, were taken from the proceedings of popular assemblies in this metropolis *. Will you relapse into this labyrinth of errors with the demagogues before your eyes, who cruelly and fatally misled you? Favour to the Roman Catholics may be opposed, if it be made a requisition of popular enthusiasm, because popular enthusiasm is insatiable; thus the persons, who profess themselves zealous, prepare the only obstacle which is difficult to be surmounted.

Towards

* The City of Dublin is perhaps that spot in the kingdom, which is least adapted to the judicious and temperate discussion of this question. If I wished to attain a just and fair expression of Roman Catholic sentiment, there are circumstances which might strongly incline me to prefer the districts of Cork, Galway, or Waterford.

Dublin is too much exposed to political intrigues, and the altercations which subsist between the Corporation and the Citizens, (in which the former is uniformly to blame,) occasion such a fretfulness of the public mind, as renders the latter very unfit to engage in deliberations, requiring, at least, address and prudence; I repeat, that the leaders alone are accountable for the proceedings of public bodies; but those Citizens of Dublin, who submit to aggregate meetings, should recollect the dreadful effect of those, which in 1795 they were induced to sanction—they should recollect other proceedings in 1796 under the same influence, and the distrusts and jealousies, which, originating from them, laid waste our provinces.

Towards the latter part of Lord Westmoreland's administration, the opposition to the Catholics was probably reduced to less than a dozen persons. The first class of Protestants observed, that the crown had ingratiated itself at their expence with the people, and were not unwilling to retort, and to bid in turn for popular favour. The middle rank, as the Catholics were now advanced to an equality with themselves, were indifferent how much further they should be elevated. The Catholics themselves had been led to the edge of a precipice; they withdrew from it appalled, and highly satisfied with their acquisition—a general calm prevailed. Such was the state of public feeling, when the fairest prospects that ever opened upon the Catholic interest in Ireland were blasted, and the condition of that entire people changed, from the most satisfactory they had hitherto enjoyed, to a state extremely the reverse, by the mischievous or injudicious intemperance of persons, who represented themselves as favouring the measures of a political party, under the unfortunate administration of Earl Fitzwilliam. In the summer of 1794, a representation (as I was at the time assured by a nobleman concerned in the transaction) was forwarded to the British government, under the signature of the leading interests in Ireland, to recommend the repeal of the subsisting Popery laws. This was the result of forbearance;—the same persons, a few months subsequent, when this measure was connected with the overthrow of their political influence, made opposition to the Catholic question their rallying point, and conjured up a storm of angry passions, which have ever since proved fatal to the repose and happiness of Ireland. I do not say that these persons were innocent or right, but assuredly upon us falls the

the penalty. I shall reserve to a moment of greater private leisure, the appropriate discussion of this subject.

Another fact will tend to prove to the people, the extent to which they have been trifled with, and will add one instance to the many, which instruct the great in the solidity of popular inclinations, and the value of popular appearances. A tender was made to the Earl of Westmoreland, that he should be drawn through the streets of Dublin by that mob, which a few months after bestowed their acclamations upon Earl Fitzwilliam. Having had occasion to allude to this noble person, I may be permitted to say, that I never can mention Earl Fitzwilliam, but with respect due to his rank, his virtues, and his patriotic intentions towards this country; intentions, which probably have fallen short of the lustre in which they ought to appear, because the purity of them was not equalled by the accuracy of local information.

I repeat my earnest exhortation to leave this matter in the hands of Parliament. Let it come in due season as an act of royal condescension; let it serve to cement our confidence in the statesmen and legislative bodies of the empire; let our own petty caballers stand aloof, and not intrusively mar what they are incompetent to accelerate; even under more favourable circumstances than exist at present, I should hesitate, if I clearly discerned an adverse bias, to compel a decision which might not easily be retracted, when the matter came to be beter understood, and considered more judiciously; I would not be induced to familiarize the Legislature, under which we have been recently placed, with the rejection of direct overtures* from the Catholics of Ireland; I would

* *Linqueret incertum quid, viso Thrasea reo, patres erant decreturi.*

I would not intrude upon the duties and prerogatives of Parliament. Where the special interest is feeble and remote, where in fact the matter is more of regulation than concession, it is a concern which ought to move from the Legislature to the people, but utterly unfit to proceed in the contrary direction. It is for the people to be affected by immediate impressions; the province of the Legislator is to calculate remote consequences, and appear provident of futurity.

It is time I should bring to a conclusion these tedious and desultory observations; they have, indeed, extended far beyond what I fancied or projected. Let me not be understood to propound the settlement which forms the main design of this Essay, in any other light than that of a collateral regulation. It does not so much consult the humours of the people, as offer a prop and security to the commonwealth amidst the perils hat assail it. Neither the affairs of their church, nor the condition of their clergy, are points to which the pride and impressions of the Roman Catholics of Ireland have been directed; it would be unfair to represent the arrangement of these objects, as likely to produce or be considered a political accommodation; it is matter of public and common utility; not, according to the usual application of these terms, a Protestant or Roman Catholic, but an Imperial and an Irish, question. The persons, who desire to retain an ascendant over Roman Catholics, must still wish this people to be fit for government; those who cannot be reconciled to admit the gentry to the character of equals, at least will not object, that the peasantry should be cultivated to a reasonable extent, and disposed to subordination.

In any description of the Roman Catholics, it would be a perverseness which I do not expect, and to which I certainly

I certainly should not subscribe, to with-hold their concurrence from an arrangement of universal expediency and use, on account of certain unliquidated claims which are not allowed, very probably because the nature, justice, and extent of them are not comprehended. In fact, the Catholics are not much more than nominally concerned in the scheme we treat of. At the present moment, the faults and foibles of the lower orders constitute a principal ground of accusation against the Catholic public; upon the turbulence of those, suspicions are founded; upon it jealousies are justified; by it persons remote from the scene of action, or otherwise liable to imposition, are filled with disgusts, and disinclined both as to the persons and political interests of this branch of the Empire. If the improvement in the condition of the Roman Catholic clergy be calculated to act upon this turbulent and inflammable mass of the lower rder, the concern must indeed be near and valuable to persons, in that communion, of property and pretensions; "these are more intent on other measures, to which no advance seems immediately to be made by this proceeding;"—granted; yet, will they be gainers, if prejudice be allayed, and an amicable adjustment facilitated with their fellow-subjects. Doubtless, it would be most desirable to set on foot a grand and comprehensive review of all the necessities of the country, involving at once, and revising lay and clerical concerns; but the institution before us is a matter in itself of substantial and independent good, such as ought to be entered upon and accomplished, although it happen not to be accompanied by another measure of ultimate perfection. If any man could suppose a thing so improbable, as that the incapacitating laws were to continue on their present footing for a century, the Roman Catholics still have an immense

stake in the constitution and property of Ireland. *Spartam nactus es, hanc exorna.* I should think it just as reasonable to reject an overture for constructing commodious roads, or cutting navigable canals, because the Penal Code has not been finally abolished; as to postpone, until the same desirable event shall take place, the care of religious instruction, the ease and application of functions, which are at once of the first necessity and of the last importance.

Something remains to be observed, on the degree of exertion and the opinions manifested during our late disturbances. It would indeed be a strange perversion, if under any unfortunate fatality; if under any circumstances of rejection, misguidance or provocation, a christian priesthood of any description could have abetted these profligate and incoherent conspiracies. When the politics of Europe began, towards the year 1790, to animate that hitherto inert mass, the Catholics of Ireland, their clergy manifested dispositions the most adverse to whatever bore the aspect of Democracy or Revolution. No man ever possessed so much ascendant over the Hiberno-Catholic clergy, as Edmund Burke; and, if the slightest management had been employed, his sentiments would have decided every individual amongst them. But in almost all parts of Ireland no sooner did symptoms of turbulence appear, than war was immediately denounced against this priesthood. If they contributed to support the cause of public authority, the service was accepted with chilling indifference; if an individual erred, the fault was trumpeted forth with the like wisdom and address, which we have already observed, in the case of the laity, and as if it was anxiously desired that the example should be imitated. I have traced through a progressive decline, the impaired sanctions

and

and diminished influence of religion; it was incompetent to awe a people impelled by so many circumstances as acted upon them previous to 1798. The priests however, would willingly have exerted themselves to pacify their people, but they were stunned by the rapidity of events. The emissaries of the republican cabal, incessant and ingenious in their activity, drew off the congregations and left the pastors in a perplexing choice of difficulties. On the one side was inclination, but neither protected nor countenanced; on the other was the concern of their personal safety, and all the feelings and considerations which imperceptibly move opinion, and change the bias of character. The Catholic clergy depended for subsistence upon that people, whom they were expected to restrain, and to oppose in headstrong humours, which had now reached beyond the power of influence; they depended upon that people for more, for those flattering tributes of estimation and reverence, which most men prize above their personal convenience. The very followers, who heretofore approached this order with affectionate respect, on the present occasion fiercely repelled their counsel, and even menaced them if they should venture to persist in the repetition of it. I should wish among our outrageous loyalists, to find those, who are ready to exchange a condition of considerable deference and comparative ease, for indigence and contumely; the pecuniary sacrifice is little, compared to the feelings that will arise in the bosom of a man, who sees his credit likely to be destroyed with the only persons on the earth by whom he was caressed and considered. Whilst the services of this clergy were imperiously required, and their inactivity made the subject of complaint, these services, when they were tendered, were often received

with distrust, often rebuffed, and sullenly rejected*; there was no cheering countenance, no encouragement to a Popish Priest from the magistracy. I cannot then consider it extraordinary, that so many appeared irresolute and inert; of instigating the people they were certainly altogether innocent;—the name of a single priest does not appear in either the banishment act, or in that for outlawing persons who did not surrender to justice. It was not until late in 1797, that under the circumstances I have described, they seemed to adopt a systematic neutrality. Another matter requires to be noticed, which will further tend to explain their situation and demeanour.

The habitual turbulence of our southern peasantry manifested itself about the year 1785, by many formidable acts of violence. The volunteer armament had for some previous years repressed this disposition; but at the same time, the conduct of the Volunteers tended very much to destroy the principle of acquiescence in the order of things established. The subject was taught to dictate to his superiors; idleness became prevalent in the middle ranks, together with an arrogant and disgusting assumption of superiority in the tradesmen over the peasant, blending frequently, with what never fails to be in Ireland the consummation of all contests—the dif-

* I am acquainted with one instance of a Roman Catholic Priest having carried a dispatch for a general officer, when no other person could venture without an escort to traverse the country; with a second instance, where a Priest volunteered to guide a detachment of the guards through a part of the country, with which they were utterly unacquainted; and with three or four cases of intended risings discovered and prevented. These persons neither sought nor expected reward: but it has occurred to me to know, that harsh treatment, in the course of the troubles, fell to the lot of some of them. It would be inconvenient to the individuals to specify particulars.

difference of religion. Political institutions were impeached at Dungannon, taxes and commercial regulations in Dublin: every corps produced its village statesman, who reiterated with the petulance of vanity, and the warmth of enthusiasm, whatever project had been promulgated under the name of liberty from the metropolis. Can we question, that the abuse * of political discussion during the American war, and for a few years subsequent, is sufficient to account for the errors into which Ireland was plunged, and even for the crimes which followed from them? The lessons found a more extended audience, and more apt disciples than probably had been expected; the common people at that period, seeing grivances, infinitely more fanciful than their own, urged with indecent vehemence, so soon as the force which kept them in awe was dispersed, became tumultuous. I refer to the rising which took place in 1785. The influence of the priest was immediately recurred to, and as the impressions of gratitude were recent, and the feeling of cordiality on all sides pretty strong, it was freely and honourably exerted. The priests came in consequence, to be mingled with other characters, obnoxious to the multitude; but the difference at the winding up was very considerable; the other bodies, who had been attacked, were favourites of the ruling power;

* I have always considered the politics of the Protestant gentry of Ireland, to have been very much influenced by this circumstance. Mr. Locke's Treatise on Government is one of the text books of the University of Dublin, and upon it the minds of the Irish youth were very much formed down to the French Revolution. The errors of that great writer having been placed in a conspicuous point of view by that event, and by the democratic discussions at home, a gentleman of the University, it would seem officially, undertook a new edition with notes, designed to qualify the dangerous opinions which formerly passed current under academic sanction.

power; their zeal was commended; special laws were enacted for their protection; no notice whatever was taken of the Catholic clergy, either collectively or as individuals: They suffered very much in the estimation of the people whom they opposed, and derived no accession of countenance or kindness from the government or the gentry. Their credit was shaken to its very foundation, and they were left without support by the parties for whom they made the sacrifice. The sense of duty must be stronger than the ordinary feelings of human nature, if on the recurrence of the like occasion, they were ready to involve themselves in a repetition of the like neglect and injury.

Yet, unquestionably, many felt and obeyed this sense of duty; they urged and exhorted their flocks to submission and tranquillity, even under the cruel and ignominious discouragement, which the obloquy, thrown upon their body since the rebellion of 1798, affixed indiscriminately to every individual. It would be revolting to candour, to reason, and to probability, to insinuate, that there was nothing of lenity, nothing of crime, no individuals, in any point of view, reprehensible, in a body of above two thousand men, of various views and passions; many of them indigent, almost all dependant; so much solicited on one hand, so much neglected on the other; thrown by their habits and sympathies amongst these classes of men who were most eminently provoked, and upon whom seduction was most powerfully practised; but the *esprit de corps* is that which is material to come at, no body of men can answer for all their members. What was the example of the chiefs? What were the outlines of the collective character? Except only the Roman Catholic clergy, there was probably not a profession in the kingdom, not a

clas-

classification, by which men are known or divided, of which some person did not seem to take a pride in having prepared or promoted the rebellion; not any Priest was avowed or counted among the heads, and if any were led into the under plots, they shrunk from notoriety. I should be much surprised, if among these two thousand men, a few scattered individuals would not be found, who silently cherished a hope to improve their means, or even to extricate themselves from their engagements, amidst the confusion of a Revolution. I should be yet more surprized, if there were not any credulous enough to believe, that all was not wrong, that was proferred or projected. Why should these be more exempt than others from infatuation and delusion? Yet, if the vice and the weakness equally lurked in obscurity; if either, when they appeared, were even considered by the parties themselves to be disgraceful, it was very plain how the collective sense and determination of the body ran, and what sort of awe was impressed upon the individuals.

The statements which have already been given upon this subject, were calculated to support accusation, and justify calumnies; they make no allowance for the previous character of those who were guilty, or the hasty determinations against those who were accused. Degraded priests, who might well be expected to join in any mischievous combination, are brought to account against that order, from which they were outcasts, and from which they had been solemnly repudiated. Before the summary and hasty tribunals, acting with or without legal warrant during the provoked and precipitate intemperance of 1798, conviction and punishment, much less accusation, afford no certainty of guilt; yet the one and the other

are

are received as undeniable ground of imputation.* Mr. Murphy was known to have marched at the head of a rebel column from Wexford; the indignation excited was very just, so far as it applied to the individual; but it was extended with precipitate fury to the order of which he was a member; his brethren, before they were heard, were condemned as accessaries.

The habits and education of the Roman Catholic clergy incline them strongly to subordination; there does not exist any object besides his Majesty's crown, to which their disposition to obey can be directed. It escaped very few of them, that irreligion was the predominant characteristic of those persons, who instigated the people to tumult, and required but little shrewdness to perceive, that under the dominion of Atheists, no form of Christianity was likely to flourish; the Jacobins were competitors with the Priests for the favour of the congregations; they were a more active, a more cunning, and a more unprincipled class of men; there cannot be a doubt, that if they acquired with the people a certain influence, they would not bear these rivals near their throne; that they would turn that influence against the priests, and by tales and surmises, by influencing the public mind with false or exaggerated representations, they would powerfully attack,

* I should not express the sentiments I entertain of the transactions in 1798, if I omitted to observe, that however unjustifiable the conduct of many individuals on the side of authority, there was great provocation to account for the part they acted. The enormous weight of crime, and the blame of all the vices that were let loose, and all the sufferings that were experienced in this country, lie upon the heads of the persons who set on foot in the north of Ireland, and in Dublin, a combination to overturn the Government, and who, by various impositions, drew the peasantry of other parts to abet them.

tack, and probably overturn, the credit which they were ambitious of supplanting. I have seldom conversed with a Priest, who did not see this fact as clearly as I now represent it. It would be strange indeed, if the probable event of popular proceedings escaped the penetration of our Roman Catholic parish Priests. In the course of my little commerce with mankind, I have not elsewhere found a greater mass of solid and practical good sense. It is the natural acuteness of the Irish character, improved by academic habits of early reflection, and sharpened by a most extensive knowledge of human nature.

THE END.

Printed by Cox, Son, and Baylis,
75, Great Queen Street.

This Day is published by J. BUDD, Crown and Mitre, Pall-Mall.

I. A LETTER from a GENTLEMAN at BERLIN to his FRIEND in LONDON, occasioned by the SEIZURE of SIR GEORGE RUMBOLD; containing a SUCCINCT VIEW of the *Life* and *Conduct* of MACBETH, and a Translation of "SKETCHES from the LIFE of OLIVER CROMWELL," which have been just published at Berlin, by KOTZEBUE; together with *a short Comparison* of the *Characters* of MACBETH and CROMWELL with that of BUONAPARTE, and a *Summary Application of the History of those Regicides to the Events of the present Day.* 8vo. price 1s.

II. OBSERVATIONS on LORD CASTLEREAGH's Speech of the 19th of July, 1804, on the State of the East-India Company's Affairs. Price 1s. 6d.

III. COBBETT's SPIRIT of the PUBLIC JOURNALS for the year 1804, consisting of Letters, Essays, &c. &c. taken from the English, American, and French, Journals. One Volume, large 8vo., price 1l. 7s. elegantly half bound in Russia Leather.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE between a GENTLEMAN in BERLIN and a PERSON OF DISTINCTION in LONDON, comprising many just Remarks on the late political Occurrences, detailed in a Series of Letters from August 1803, to June 1804; in which will be found some curious Extracts from a Memorial and Project of Peace, written by a French diplomatic Negotiator in London, and transmitted to Buonaparte in June 1801, translated from a Manuscript Copy of the Original; also Buonaparte's Address to the English Nation, intended to have been distributed on the Landing of the French Army on the British Coast. 1 vol. 8vo. price 5s. in boards.

V. LETTERS on SILESIA, written during a Tour through that Country in the Years 1800, and 1801; by his Excellency JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, then Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States to the Court of Berlin; and since a Member of the American Senate. Embellished with a neat Map. In 1 vol. 8vo. price 8s. in boards.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 371 207 A